Semiotic Facet of Reconciliation: Politics of the Representation of Indo-Pak Relations in Google Ad

Malik Haq Nawaz Danish¹, Mehwish Riaz²*

¹ Assistant Professor, Govt. Postgraduate College, Gojra. dani_malik@hotmail.com
² Associate Professor, University of Engineering and Technology, Lahore.
*Corresponding author’s email address: mehvishriaz@ymail.com

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ABSTRACT

Visual representations regulate reform, construct, and subvert ideologies that affect lives, cultural images, credibility, and international relations, etc. The study diverts attention to the soft power of visual discourse in challenging stereotypes through nuanced semiotic representations of Pak-India relations, identities of Pakistani and Indian people, their willingness to reconcile, and the impact of reconciliation. The study points out that discourse has played role in promoting misconceptions, hostility, and divergence, and discourse can subvert the ideologies and promote reconciliation, stability, and convergence. Using the triadic model of sign consisting of icon, indexical, and symbol, suggested by Peirce (1931-58), combined with the Noldus software to study facial expressions, the study highlights the ‘politics of the representation’ (Hutcheon, 1989, 1991) of reconciliation and Indo-Pak relations in the Google advertisement of reunion (2013). While there is a paucity of the visual discourse of reconciliation between Pakistan and India, the Google ad semiotically represents the themes of memory, reconciliation, post-partition trauma and the wistfulness to stay together authentically, however, this representation has its politics because it conceals the bloodshed, struggle, loss, and violation of human rights spanning over 70 years in India, Pakistan, and especially Kashmir. Results of the NOLDUS Software are indicative of the national traumatic history of India and Pakistan that chronicles the debilitating past since partition. More constructive but authentic portrayals may help build bilateral relations.

Keywords: Semiotics of Reconciliation, Indo-Pak Relations, Triadic Model Jingoistic Ideology The ideology of Hatred Politics of Representation, Stereotypes

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1. Introduction

Hatred embedded in the historical narrative is an instinctive national tendency that is directed toward the aversion of an idea, nation, religion, and ethnicity. It reflects an individual’s tendency to nourish patriotic feelings for the country and sentiments of hatred for the ‘others’. An individual of a community creates differences based on color, creed, and race. These variances and resultant sentiments are further bolstered by the historical accounts, often comprising of bleak details and impending intimidation of the future. Hatred is further strengthened when nations wage physical and discursive wars on other nations. An unending phase of bloodshed and war crime is perpetuated and regulated by such attempts in the visual narratives because it serves the purpose of dominant groups who want power because power now is persuasive and manipulative, and not a coercive act (van Dijk, 1996).

Moisi (2010) locates the notion of a clash of civilizations and ideologies fertilizing the emotions of hatred among nations. The media influence is imported to the audience regarding the detrimental effects of promoting hatred and ideology in the visual signs textured in the visual narratives. These episodes of ideological concern are pertinent in the wake of historical events that took place in Pakistan and India. Waters (2000) states, “we can no longer represent the historical past, but can only ‘represent’ our ideas and stereotypes about the past” (p. 17). “We are living in a mediated world where reality is framed and shaped by media” (Yousaf et al., 2020, p. 37). The lives of the people in the media-oriented world are much directed by such extended historical visual narratives, conveying ideological disguised signification in the semiotic structures of the screen or visuals through repetitive use of visual signs and symbols (van Dijk, 1996, Riaz, 2021; Riaz, 2019). Under-representations and discursively framed realities may affect the cultural image and well-being of people (Riaz, 2022; Riaz, 2021; Riaz & Rafi, 2019).

Concerning Pak-India relations, an invocation of historical events in the visual text has also been narrated in a manner to promote historical hatred. “In March 2019, Facebook removed hundreds of pages from India and Pakistan that exhibited coordinated inauthentic behavior and spam” (Sarwar, 2019). Facebook deleted 103 pages and accounts from Pakistan, and 687 pages and accounts from India that exhibited such inauthentic behavior (Gleicher, 2019). According to Butt (2021), EU DisinfoLab published a report entitled Indian Chronicles, suggesting a “staggering network of misinformation and propaganda against Pakistan. The report exposed an operation that took place over 15 years in 116 countries, featuring more than 500 fake media outlets and a dozen fake NGOs. This network endeavored to push a pro-India and anti-Pakistan narrative in the European Union and the United Nations.” Media and discourse, in this way, serve as tools to regulate fifth-generation warfare.

An important facet of visual narrative is to portray reality. Electronic media has always been an effective medium in influencing the audience toward certain ideas and inculcating information through elements of visual narratives. These elements such as settings, costumes, color, camera angle, props, and gestures, etc. influence the audience through subliminal messages encoded in the visual text. What people hear on the radio or see on television has a stronger influence on how they see their socio-cultural realities. Moreover, “the role of media in achieving social consensus within societies regarding issues, and attributes” and promoting “common agendas of the public” is undeniable (Yousaf, et al., 2020, p. 37). Advertisements are the most efficient medium of infotainment. The efficiency also depends on the ability of the audience to extract the
meanings embedded in the visuals and relate them to their existing epistemological schemas. People, across national boundaries, construct a sense of identity for themselves and develop a sense of ‘other’ for others in such a process of exchanging ideas.

Stereotypes and negative attitudes are promoted by both Indian and Pakistani media. Stereotypes are prevalent in most dramas and films. The print and electronic media share the people's antipathy on both sides of the border and contribute to the weakening of connections between the countries. As a result, both Pakistan and India are fighting a discursive or rhetorical war on media fronts as well. Kuszewska (2022) indicates that domestic, bilateral, and international circumstances lead both adversaries to buttress their belligerent narratives rather than constructively address the issue by de-escalating mutual tensions and resolving the difficulties of Kashmir's indigenous residents. As a result, not only Kashmiri, Indian and Pakistani people have suffered for decades, but the security system in South Asia has also been adversely affected.

Since the days of independence, both the countries have been fraught with contentious political issues and armed confrontation (Saleem et al., 2014; Connah, 2021). Most of the conflicts between both countries were maintained due to the non-resolution of the Kashmir issue and disturbance at the borders. Failed attempts made by Pakistan, Indian manipulation of the occupation of Kashmir (Younis, 2020), and the “unjust attitude of the international community” have “created a calamitous scenario for Kashmiris for the last 70 years” (Masood & Muzaffar, 2019, p. 161). Consequently, the Kashmir issue hangs in balance for both the countries as the future of the territory is still in question even though India, “abrogated Article 370 of the Indian constitution” (dw.com), and “unilaterally annexed occupied Kashmir” since August 5, 2019, stripping Kashmir of its semi-autonomous status and violating human rights of Kashmiris through brutal violence and “digital apartheid” which further aggravated the situation for Kashmiris during covid-19 health crisis (Human Rights Watch, 2020; trtworld.com, 2020; conversation.com, 2020; the Dawn, 2020; Connah, 2021). Furthermore, the demarcation of the borders, limitation of the Line of Control, and Siachen Glaciers are all offshoots of the conflict and historical hatred between both the countries.

History supports the evidence that leaders from all over the world have pulled the nations into a state of war for their vested interests. The grim history starts with the mass exodus of the Muslims from India to Pakistan and the Hindus and the Sikhs from Pakistan to India. The migrants on both sides were the victims of devastation and the heavy toll of brutality. It seemed that the belief in the unity of human beings regardless of their religion, race, color, or creed was indeed mistaken. It was supposed by the proponents of the partition that the division would decrease the hostility between the Muslims and the Hindus and the issues would be resolved but the claim seemed to be failed as the gulf between the two had gradually widened. The hostility still exists and the rivalry from the battlefield to the cricket ground has exacerbated. Historical facts and current events lead us to conclude that the countries on each side of the border are prepared to attack the other. Attempts to learn from the past, build a sense of camaraderie, and strengthen relations have remained a rallying cry for the peace process in the region.

In this study, we intend to investigate the representation of reconciliation and the various layers through which reconciliation efforts on both sides of the border are sustained and intensified, with implications for all peace processes and strong bilateral relations between Pakistan and India. Two main issues discussed in the study include a passion for patriotism at the cost of hatred for the other and the ultimate yearning for reconciliation. The important influence of
visual narrative, symbolizing the historical truth of both the nations in the wake of historical events, employed in the Google ad has been socio-semiotically interpreted. The triadic model of signs suggested by Peirce (1931-1958) has been employed to explore the semiotics of reconciliation about the postmodern features of the representations promoting jingoistic ideologies in the Google ad. The reader recognizes the signs and “goes on to decipher some sort of cultural, social or emotional meanings” (Cobley & Jansz, 1998, p. 50).

As far as existing studies on the ideological discursive representations of Pakistan and India are concerned, Ali et al., (2019) studied the representation of Pakistan and India in the New York Times, The Guardian, and China Daily and found that “American and British newspapers primed the Indian issues of democracy, economy, sports, and scientific development. On the other hand, these newspapers primed Pakistan with issues of nuclear assets, terrorism, health, and human rights violations. However, China Daily primed India and Pakistan differently. It focused on Indian issues of human rights, security, environment, and diplomatic relations. On the other side, it primed the Pakistani issues of economy, trade, defense and efforts against terrorism” (p. 271). Saleem et al., (2014) noted that articles published in the Dawn reinforced the need for positive relations and confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan to combat terrorism, the Kashmir issue, the water crisis and economic instability. Riaz et al., (2018) studied the discursive representation of Kashmir in Indian and Pakistani newspapers. They found that Indian newspapers gave lesser coverage to the Kashmir issue. Pakistani newspapers used positive frames for the Kashmir movement, while Indian newspapers used negative frames for the movement. Riaz et al., (2018) emphasized that authentic representations of Kashmir must be made. Jabeen (2016) suggested that post 9/11 political cartoons published in Pakistani newspapers socio-semiotically “represent the Indian euphoria after 9/11 to weaken Pakistan through a well-planned propagating campaign” (p. 109). India represented through Mr. Vajpayee has been shown as desiring to destabilize Pakistan. Safi et al., (2020) found that after the Pulwama attack in Kashmir, Indian newspapers represented ‘self’ positively, while the ‘other’ i.e., Pakistan extremely negatively. The present study, however, examines the semiotic representation of Pakistan and India in the Google ad. Semiotics of Indo-Pak relations is an understudied area, though India has been represented as a country of colors, dance, love, spices, magic, and beauty, while Pakistan, contrarily has been represented as a terrorist, and fundamentalist country, it is important to study the visual representations of both the countries from the perspectives of conflict, Kashmir, partition, violence, and war. The present study, therefore, fills the gap in the existing literature on framing, visual representations, Indo-Pak history of conflict, “agenda-setting of media” (Yousaf et al., 2020, p. 38; Qaisar & Riaz, 2020, p. 93) and the need for authentic representations. The study is also extending the debate on the semiotics of reconciliation.

2. Methods
2.1. Data Collection

Ten images from Google ad have been selected as data. Google ad of reunion (2013) supplements the events of the history and supports the sentiment of reconciliation between India and Pakistan. The ad serves the purpose of history where partition and pre-partition have been referred to. The audience is moved towards reconciliation as the narrative strengthens the history when the hatred was not promoted, and the consciousness of the national identity was missing.
The need of the millennium is highlighted and the attempt to reconcile two old friends, (representing two nations) is carried through the search tab of Google.

The ad starts with Baldev Mehra, an elderly man of Hindu origin living in Delhi, India. He narrates his story of friendship with Yousaf, his childhood friend, by showing her an old photograph. He narrates the period before the partition when he and Yousaf lived in Lahore. He details that there was a park in front of his house, with a gate made in the stone age. He and Yousaf used to fly kites and enjoy stolen Jhajariya from Yousaf’s sweets shop. Baldev still misses his friend and recounts his childhood. He also claims that he misses Yousaf a lot. He and his family had to leave Pakistan in 1947 at the time of partition to migrate to India.

His granddaughter, using Yousaf’s details and the description of his sweets shop in Lahore, google the location of the Mochi Gate (as narrated by Baldev) and ultimately visits the web page of Fazal Sweets (Yousaf’s sweets shop). She dials and connects to Yousaf in Pakistan through contacts displayed on the web page and introduces herself to Yousaf as Baldev Singh’s granddaughter. Yousaf smiles on recognizing the contact and looks at his grandson with a meaningful gaze. His grandson also googles the Indian Visa Requirement on the search tab and proceeds to pay a visit to India. He also googles the weather forecast and prepares suitable baggage for the visit. Sumon (Baldev’s granddaughter) receives them from the airport and escorts them home to surprise Baldev on his birthday. Yousaf rings the doorbell and Baldev inquires about the visitor. As both the friends meet after many decades, Yousaf wishes him the words ‘Happy birthday Yara’ to remind him of his childhood affiliation. Baldev recognizes him at once and both of them embrace each other.

The Google ad has been selected because it helps understand the divergent semiotic patterns of the representation of Pak-India relations. After all, the ‘politics of the representation’ of both countries has been discursively ideological for decades. The Google ad, however, helps instigate the ideological compromise in the audience of both India and Pakistan. The ad is an opportunity to study how the hostility between Pakistan and India has been semiotically framed and underrepresented to promote feelings of reconciliation and friendship. It helps highlight how even a constructive representation can be political, manipulative, and altered.

### 2.2. Data Analysis

To study the semiotic representation of memory, wistfulness, and reconciliation, in the Google ad, the system of the sign, labeled as an icon, index, and symbol, suggested by Peirce (1931-1958) has been applied to six images. The notion of ‘sign’ serves as the starting point of social semiotics. “Signs are elements in which the ‘signifier’ (a material ‘form’) and the ‘signified’ (a ‘meaning’) are combined” (Riaz, 2020, p. 104). Peirce (1931-1958) identifying three modes of relationships between signs and signified, which are symbol, indexical, and icon, expounded that one thing which can be a sign for one community is not necessarily to be connoted as the same sign by another community. Signs are developed according to cultural norms, ideologies, and traditions. The sign always acts as a function between individuals, communities or groups, etc. (Cobley & Jansez, 2000). In short, human beings always act as a ‘homo significant’ who use signs and perceive different meanings to seek or share information. Symbol, according to Peirce (1931-1958) is an arbitrary and conventional mode of relationship between a signifier and its signified, which implies that the relationship has to be learned and agreed upon because the signifier doesn’t resemble its signified. Examples include language, numbers, traffic lights,
alphabetical letters, flags, etc. Iconic signs are those signs in which the signifier is perceived to be resembling the signified or looking, smelling, or sounding like it; for example, a portrait, dubbed sounds, a cartoon, metaphors, and imitative gestures, etc. “Indexical is a mode in which the signifier is not arbitrary but directly connected” to the signifier in some way, such as natural signs (rain, smoke, thunder), trademarks (handwriting), medical symptoms (pain, rashes, heartbeat), measuring tools (clock, thermometer) and pointers (pointing index finger, signposts), etc. (Chandler, 2007, p. 37). A symbol functions regardless of any resemblance, similarity, or factual connection between a signifier and its signified. “Iconicity is based on (at least perceived) ‘resemblance’ and indexicality is based on (at least perceived) ‘direct connection’” (Chandler, 2007, p. 37).

The iconic, indexical, and symbolic signs in the form of settings, dress code of the characters, expressions, colors, and gestures, etc. in the ad have been contrasted with the representations of national identity on both the sides of the border and further analyzed to bring out the hidden semiotic and cultural implication to light. The narrative in the Google ad of reunion also pertains to the politics of representation as theorized by Hutcheon (1989). The reality in the ad is constructed to flash national narratives for the viewers and maintain the patriotic stance of the ad-makers. The facial expressions displayed by the characters in the ad have been analyzed in four images by utilizing Noldus software of human behavior to objectify the signification.

2.3. Analysis

![Image](Figure 1: Mosque in Delhi)

2.3.1. The Ideal of Interfaith Harmony

The opening scene of the ad is taken from a top down angle of Delhi. The shot is taken with the background of ‘Azaan’ (Call for prayers) from Jamia Masjid Delhi, the Muslim Centre in India. The call for prayers is followed by the recollections of the past by Mehra, a Hindu, who narrates the pre-partition childhood memories to his granddaughter.

The first shot in Delhi is deliberately framed to purport the multicultural community of the Muslims and the Hindus in the city. The call for prayers in the opening scene is a symbolic sign, signifying the freedom of theology for the Muslims in India, while the narration of the partition by Mehra connotes the Hindu exodus from Pakistan. The angle of the shot is high, an iconic sign signifying the situation that the ad represents i.e., to rise above the boundaries of religion or ethnicity. The clouds over the city are indexical signs, signifying the fertility of the purpose, blessing of the nature to be showered over the united diverse community.
2.3.2. Cultural Diversity in Pakistan

The next scene for the analysis is taken from Fazal Sweets, a sweet shop owned by Yousaf in Lahore, Pakistan. The granddaughter of Mehra contacted Fazal Sweets by surfing Google and called Yousaf up. The call is received by Yousaf’s grandson and diverted to Yousaf, an elderly man such as Mehra himself.

Unlike Delhi, Lahore is portrayed in different colors. The people gathered in the market are costumed to connote Muslim identities. Almost all of them are wearing caps while two of the ladies in the market are clad in a burqa (veil). Two of the men have beards. The beard is a sign of Muslim association with Islam. The cap worn by the men is another religious sign, signifying the Muslim affiliation with the theological teachings. The veil by the women is an indexical sign, signifying the status of the women to be protected and respected in the Muslim community. The different styles of caps worn by the men in the image are also indexical, signifying the affiliations of the followers with their sects. Two of them, however, neither have beards nor are they wearing caps. They signify the secular population and diversity in Pakistan.

2.3.3. Generation Gap and Construal of Fearing or Trusting the ‘Other’

The scene depicts the event when Yousaf, along with his grandson prepares for the departure to Delhi. His grandson, like Mehra’s granddaughter in India, searches on Google to gather information regarding visa requirements and packs luggage after confirming the weather forecast. Yousaf is seated in the open air passively as his mind is experiencing a trance of the past, his childhood. Yousaf and his grandson’s spatial position is symbolic. Yousaf is sitting in the open air, near the green stair fence, symbolically signifying his open mind while visiting India, while his grandson, is indoors,signifying his constrained thinking as he pays more attention to the physical commodities necessary for the visit plan. He carries an umbrella, indexically signifying his fear of rain and his protective nature while in the ‘other’ country. Yousaf gazes ahead which symbolically signifies his firm attitude and ‘looking forward’ stance to meeting his childhood friend in India.
2.3.4. Pre and Post Partition Cultural Divide and Distance
The image depicts Yousaf’s arrival at Mehra’s house in India. It is a surprise for Mehra as he does not recognize him. The way Yousaf greets him by uttering ‘Happy birthday Yara’, retrieves the childhood memories. Mehra greets him after recognizing him, uttering emotional words, ‘Oye Yousaf Oye’ and they embrace each other. The ad for the reunion is concluded as soon as Yousaf takes a few steps toward Mehra and embraces him warmly.

The setting is indoors. It is Mehra’s house in Delhi, India. The characters in the image represent two different nations: India and Pakistan. Mehra looks at the face of the newcomer, trying to recognize the visitor. He wears shirts and is clean-shaved, symbolic signs signifying his adaptability to modern times. Yousaf on the other hand is clad in his traditional dress, qameez shalwar, and shawl. He also has a bearded face. His appearance is an iconic sign, signifying his patriotism, religious affiliation, and nationalistic tendencies. His beard is indexical, signifying his religion and association with his ethnic background. Both the participants in the image are old having white hair and Yousaf also has a white beard which are indexical signs signifying the association of both the nations, pre-partition, and post-partition.

2.3.5. Reconciliation and Generation Gap
The setting is Mehra’s house in Delhi, India. The frame of the image is extended to include Mehra and Yousaf’s grandchildren. Both the old men meet warmly, while the new generation is represented by the grandchildren who managed to reunite the elders, bridge gaps, and eliminate differences. The act of embracing is highly symbolic. It is Yousaf who moves towards Mehra, while Mehra is immobilized at his doorstep. The act of taking a few steps towards Mehra is symbolic, signifying the stance on the part of an ‘Indian’ to keep the doors open, but making a ‘Pakistani’ move towards him and embrace. Yousaf is made to make a move towards Mehra as he has opened the door and then waits for him to leave his ‘stance’ and advance towards him.
The act is symbolic of the jingoistic tendency of both nations to make diplomatic moves towards a better bilateral relationship.

Figure 6: Enjoying reconciliation

2.3.6. In Harmony are Found Happiness and Bliss
Figure 6 has been taken from the end of the ad. The reunion is being celebrated by the childhood friends in their old age. Both are enjoying the rain and commemorating the memories of a united India. They sit in the backyard of the house and posture as though they were doing it in their childhood. They are not afraid of getting a chill in the rain as both are very happy about reuniting. The reunion in the image is beneficial for the Pakistani as he is framed from through frontal angle. He is given a maximum frame to signify the fertility of the act of stepping toward the Indian for reconciliation. The plants in the background also signify some fertility and positivity of the attempt made by Yousaf. Moreover, both the Indian and the Pakistani are made immune to the ‘rain’, which connotes suffering in literature, if they are united. Rain is also an indexical sign of blessing and happiness because it connotes blessing in Muslim and Pakistani narratives. The image signifies that the fertility of the reunion is beneficial for both the nations as the ‘old’ memories profess the auguries of brotherhood.

Figure 7: Facial Expressions of Mehra’s granddaughter

The readings of the facial expressions by NOLDUS software indicate the emotional response of the Indians and the Pakistanis in the ad. Mehra’s granddaughter initiates the reunion attempt while she surfs the internet using Google and searches the archives related to Yousaf’s identity in Pakistan. On knowing that she succeeds in locating Yousaf in Pakistan, she displays 86.2% happiness and 10.3% neutral expression in Figure 7. Her expressions mainly signify happiness on an ‘Indian face’ on trying to reunite. The happiness is indexical, signifying the state of mind on contacting old acquaintances in Pakistan.
Figure 8: Facial Expressions of Yousaf’s grandson

Figure 8 frames Yousaf’s grandson. On knowing the attempt made by an Indian girl for a reunion, he displays 23.3% happiness on his face, while 72% of the emotions are neutral. Furthermore, 5.7% of the emotions are unknown as he does not know how to respond to the situation. The comparison between Mehra’s granddaughter and Yousaf’s grandson is vivid. The comparative analysis of the facial expression is indicative of the responses by both nations on the issue of reconciliation.

Figure 9: Mehra’s Facial Expressions

In Figure 9, Mehra recalls their childhood memories and claims that he misses Yousaf a lot. Mehra expresses 69% of sadness on his face for his lost friend at the time of partition, while he also yields 20.6% of neutral expression as he opens his heart to his granddaughter. He cherishes the memories of childhood and feels happy as 6.3 % of his facial expressions connote happiness. The response of an Indian to his lost friend, a Pakistani, is catered by the producer to install ideological responses of the Indians in the event of partition.

Figure 10: Yousaf’s Facial Expressions

In Figure 10, Yousaf arrives at Mehra’s house in Delhi. Yousaf displays 19.4% emotions of sadness, while 45.6% of expressions are neutral. On the other hand, Yousaf also shows 30.8% of contempt at his arrival which connotes the separation of the subcontinent of which Yousaf himself disapproves. The contempt punctuates the lost past of love and friendship between Mehra and Yousaf, India and Pakistan.
The emotional response of the characters in the Google ad is well organized and displayed by the characters. Representation of the post-partition scenario in the ad involves some degrees of the politics of invisibility.

3. Discussion

Hutcheon (1989) means “the ideological values and interests that inform any representation” (p. 7), by using the term “politics of representation” while affirming that an image is always “historically conditioned” and is a “product of (and producer of) ideology” (p. 31). Hutcheon (1989) claims that creative visual representations in art can be manipulated or altered to communicate and confirm certain ideologies. ‘Politics of representation’, refers to the teleological stimulus employing a specific metanarrative in terms of teleological motivation. Furthermore, historiographic metafiction expounds the historical events through representation that always occurs in present contexts; consequently, the anachronistic appearances can be frequently noted. The goal of such representational techniques, when employed, indicates the status of historical records or documents to be problematic, as they do not give direct, unmediated access to the historical facts they allude to. ‘Politics of representation’ focuses on the political factors and motivations in determining how historiographic narrative is represented. “Representation is always alteration, be it in language or images, and it always has its politics” (Hutcheon, 1980, p. 92).

The Google ad politicizes the Indo-Pak relations by “framing” (Qaisar & Riaz, 2020, p. 96) what is ‘not’ there between both countries and endeavors to dismantle ‘what is there, by representing the wistfulness of those who want to connect to their loved ones living across the border, as well as those who want peace to be established in the region. Hutcheon (1991) also states, “social history cannot be separated from the history of art: in both, memory is at work. There is no value-neutral, much less value-free place from which to represent-in any art form. And there never was” (p. 129). It is a reproduction of reality on one level, and alteration of reality on another level simultaneously, because though it highlights the trauma of separation and the pleasure of reconciliation, it conceals the existence of multiple realities concerning the bewildering history of Indo-Pak relations spanning over decades. By semiotically highlighting the facet of reconciliation, it minimizes the realities such as the Kashmir conflict, bomb blasts, killings, strikes, protests, massive multilayered exploitation of Kashmiri people, Hindu-Muslim disputes, war on resources, borders, and in the discourse, and impact of war on the socio-economic well-being of Kashmiris, Indians, and Pakistanis. On the one hand, as a postmodernist construction of the desire and impact of peace, unity, inter-faith harmony, or reconciliation, it is a potent effort to destabilize the metanarratives of war, conflict, and power; while on the other hand, considering the realities, it is an idealized construction of a fragmented reality.

It is pertinent to note that the constructed truths, previously known to be ‘meta-narratives’ are offered to be deconstructed for developing new perceptions of the world with a new experience (Jameson, 1991). The postmodern conditions, when analyzed, are as much a part of history as appropriating the grand or national narrative to support or construct truth deliberately. The grand narrative of the partition between India and Pakistan is also chronicled and constructed as an episode of the great massacre, practices of butchery, and bloodshed. The partition lined the border with a fence on both sides, initiating further warlike conditions between the two countries. The attempts of reconciliation and developing sustainable bilateral relations were followed at intervals, yet the hatred was much more maintained through the texts in both countries. Google
ad attempts to make a worth watching effort because the postmodern lens gives new meanings to what has been projected otherwise.

Just like post-modernist conditions destabilize the metanarratives of patriarchy, cultural hegemony, and power, the Google ad also destabilizes the cultural and discursive ideologies of hatred, jingoism, anti-India, and anti-Pakistan narrative that accentuates fragmentation and animosity.

However, it creates an idealistic facet of reconciliation, ignoring the number of pre and post-partition killings and exploitation to date. It camouflages the blatant atrocities and abuse of human rights by Indian security forces in Kashmir. As Indian media portrays the Indian illegal occupation of Kashmir as a legitimate matter of national interest (Hernandes, 2020), Indian people, perhaps, have never felt the pain of the loss of lives, peace, and stability experienced by Kashmiri men, women, and children over decades. Since the human mind renders things in dichotomies, therefore, numerous binaries have been made in the visual narration of the Google ad. These binaries are favoring the Indian narrative. Images have been screened with a vantage view that projects a partial side of the reality and secures the Indian stance on the partition. When the azan (call for prayers) is being narrated, the scene shows the tomb of the Jamia Mosque Delhi and a scattering kit of pigeons. These signs have been used to foreground peace and interfaith harmony in India which, considering the marginalization of Muslims in India, and violence in Kashmir, is not the case in reality. Google Ad of reunion also signifies the Indian celebrated slogan of “Akhand Bharat” meaning ‘undivided India, which is politically propagated through seemingly apolitical images. This slogan endangers the ‘Two Nation Theory’ which is the basis of Pakistan. The reunion of the two friends encourages healthy relations between the two arch-enemy states but politically, it reaffirms the stereotypes concerning the appearance of Pakistanis, as well as their concerns. Yousaf’s return to India also has ideological implications. Jabeen (2016) notes, “several prominent Indian leaders considered partition to be temporary; they were convinced that Pakistan, like the prodigal son, would return to the fold of Mother India” (p. 91).

Partition of India witnessed the largest mass migration from both sides, but the ad highlights the exodus of the Hindus who were forced to leave Lahore. Moreover, Mehra, who is living in New Delhi, welcomes his childhood Muslim friend who was invited by Mehra’s granddaughter. This, while decentralizing various facts, highlights the initiation of reconciliation by India.

Narrativization has always been used as a technique to strengthen national ideologies. Both the countries have been using narrativization to regulate their respective ideologies. To attain certain politically loaded ends, the art of representation is employed. Apolitical images have deep implications which work unknowingly on the spectators. Narrativization and art forms have become a national need to inculcate the historical facts constructively and authentically among the Indian and Pakistani masses. The present study neither implies that the ad producers have deliberately reproduced the ideologies or biased representations nor is an effort to malign their constructive effort to create ease for Pakistani and Indian people in reconciling and traveling across the border. However, it emphasizes that the representations reflect the cognitive models or ideologies unconsciously learned by people through media and discourse. Many sides of the picture need to be represented constructively to understand diverse ideologies and perspectives.

4. Conclusion
Analyzing the semiotics of the Google ad of reunion, the patterns of the politics of representations have been investigated. The ideological stances of the producer conform to the
postmodern concept of representation. Foregrounded in the backdrop of the partition of the subcontinent, the Google ad for reunion involves politicized or altered representation through its divergent connotations. A partial narrative has been constructed by flourishing seemingly putative visual narration which favors the Indian narrative on some level.

In postmodernist conceptualization, the nature of representation is investigated to explore how reality is misconstrued by showcasing the ‘metaknowledge’ of the real event through a politicized representation. The postmodernists educe the unpresentable in the representation, which is disrupted by long celebrated beliefs and epitomes, and rebuffed the unanimity of socio-cultural perceptions, allowing a shared know-ability of nostalgia to attain the impossible and scrutinize newly constructed representations with the sole aim of fashioning the sense that there lies something unpresentable. The progressive perfection of the signification paradoxically leads toward a distortion of the disparate representational systems along with the periphery between the reality which is based on conflicts and accusations, and the signs which represent pleasure, peace, unity, and reconciliation in the ad.

The ad in essence is constructive because it highlights the need to establish peace, however, from the perspective of the politics of representation, it politically and persuasively camouflages the strained Indo-Pak relations and Kashmir issue. The idealistic facet of reconciliation represents the trauma of separation but hides the loss, aggression, violence, war, and hatred. It is an opportunity to create similarly constructive but much more authentic and unbiased representations as discursive tools to create harmony in the region. More visual representations of Kashmir about the tug of war between India and Pakistan are also needed. Research can be carried out on how Pakistani and Indian people have been discursively represented in the textbooks being used in both countries. Moreover, visual representations of Pakistani people in Indian media, songs, films, and dramas can be analyzed. The same can be done in the case of Pakistani visual discourse.

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