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Maps and Diaspora: Affect, Agency and Epistolary Praxis

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ABSTRACT

Following discussions, interactions and reflections during the 2024 Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) conference 'Map Room Conversations' sessions, this paper examines archival maps in relation to diaspora through an affective lens. Using an auto-ethnographic epistolary praxis of letter-writing and the therapeutic prompt 'What came up for you?', it aims to bring out marginalised narratives and enable diasporic subjects to reclaim agency over their histories and identities. As a medium for the performativity of memory, letter-writing enables affective engagement with maps of 'Hindustan' and 'Himalaya', facilitating access to suppressed emotions and genealogical narratives, shifting away from viewing maps as merely colonial artefacts and repositioning them as 'mediators' of diasporic affect and agency, thus animating them as sites of remembering, reconnecting and healing.

Discussing the diaspora raises questions about migration, identity, home and belonging (Kalra et al. 2005). In Foucauldian terms, diaspora is a genealogical category based on shared histories and memories, not on fixed, essentialised origins (Brah 2022), whereby a key aspect of the diasporic condition is the pursuit of genealogical accounting, seeking answers to the question: how did we get here? (Quayson 2013, 151). Much of the literature has viewed maps as visual representations of geographical space, in which power relations shape dominant ways of seeing and visualising the world, where archival maps often reflect an imperial, Eurocentric imagination rooted in exploration and extraction. Maps from British imperialism represent colonial space-making practices that project socio-political relations onto geographical space through racialised encounters, population dispersal and territorial borders that continue to haunt diasporic subjects (Quayson 2013, 144). Aitken (2009, 2) describes colonial maps as 'God-Tricks', striving for a disembodied, universal and objective perspective that erase local, subjective geographic knowledges. However, as Oslender (2021, 4) argues, geographies can also be reimagined through a 'cartographies otherwise' rooted in subaltern worldviews that can challenge dominant imaginaries.

Although earlier literature emphasised the politics of representation, recent scholarship has shifted towards a post-representational, particularly performative and affective understanding of mapping (Perkins 2009). Through this lens, maps are infused with creative power, performed through tactical and bodily actions and emotions, thereby invoking hidden memories and re-centring marginalised diasporic narratives (Awan 2016). Within the affective turn, emotions are understood not merely as biological responses but as a socially situated sense-making process that informs understandings of place and subjectivity (McGrath et al. 2020). Zavala Guillen (2023) highlights how affective cartographies shape diasporic identities by channelling suppressed memories that are often alive and present within the bodies of those with genealogical ties to colonial maps. This can create new imagined geographies shaped by memories or the embodied, unstructured recollections of the past that dwell in the affective body. These memories are invoked through emotional mapping that traces the past and present, where emotions extend back in time to articulate diasporic identities within current social and political formations (Balkenhol 2014). As such, archival maps can operate both as mechanisms of colonial domination and as sources of creative resistance and agency.

Building on the Royal Geographical Society with Institute of British Geographers (RGS-IBG) 2024 Annual Conference 'Map Room Conversations' sessions, this paper examines the relationship between maps and diaspora through an affective lens. We employ an autoethnographic epistolary method, utilising the therapeutic prompt 'What came up for you?' to respond to the two chosen maps. We focus on archival maps of 'Hindustan' and 'Himalaya' produced during British colonialism in South Asia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, currently housed in the RGS-IBG archives. We undertake a 'symptomatic reading' (Asoni 2025, 3), adopting a critical approach to archival maps by reading against the grain (Stoler 2008). Our autoethnographic letters focus on 'aftermaths' (Cooppan 2019, 408), connecting the colonial past to the postcolonial present as a theoretical-political-methodological space that enables remembering and resilience. The paper's key interventions centre on two elements: maps and letters, which work in tandem to write back to colonial maps through affective registers. We argue that while maps act as 'mediators' (Awan 2016, 120) of diasporic affect and agency, letter-writing functions as the primary medium, enabling the performativity of memories through action-based modes of remembering. To reach this conclusion, the following section outlines the background and explains the epistolary method. It then presents the two maps and their corresponding letters written by the authors, followed by a thematic discussion that synthesises three core elements: tracing genealogy through memory work; exploring embodied and affective responses; and asserting diasporic imagination through cartographies otherwise. In doing so, the paper repositions archival maps from static colonial artefacts into dynamic sites of remembering, reconnecting and healing.

1 | 'Map Room Conversations': Preparation, Interaction and Reflection

On 30 August 2024, both authors participated in a 'Map Room Conversation' session themed 'Maps and Diasporic Communities' at the RGS-IBG annual conference. The event aimed to connect diasporic communities with archival maps, serving as a site of interaction and dialogue between the authors and audiences. The two authors spoke as the primary speakers, while a small group of academics, researchers and practitioners formed an active audience, engaging with insights and questions (Figure 1).

Our extensive prior work with specific diasporic communities and institutional archives informed the preparation for the Map Room Conversations. For Iqbal, this stemmed from his decade-long career at The National Archives, focusing on bringing together diasporic communities and archival resources through creative practices. Iqbal previously devised projects for the 70th anniversary of the Partition of British India (2017) and the 80th anniversary of the Second World War (2025), which involved outreach workshops in London and regional UK diasporic communities. Within this context, official records, often biased towards state and imperial viewpoints, clash with communities' fragmented memories of migration and displacement, leading to what Salman Rushdie calls partial or incomplete understandings (Giri 2005). But for Iqbal, rather than attempting to resolve this dissonance, creative practice provides a vital space to embrace the fragments. Rohini's contribution to the Map Room conversations stemmed from her British Academy-funded project, Indigenising the Himalayas (2023–2024), developed with the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). The project collaborated with three UK-based Himalayan Indigenous diaspora community organisations (Kirat Yakthung Chumlung, Kirat Rai Yayokkha, World Newah Organisation UK Chapter), and involved a participatory workshop featuring archival re-captioning, re-mapping, dancing and storytelling activities. This created a space for community members to engage with archival maps and photographs of the Eastern Himalaya (Nepal, Sikkim, Darjeeling) through memory, embodiment and dialogue. Thus, through participatory and creative engagement, we transitioned from 'experts' to 'collaborators', transforming colonial maps into sites of critical social thought that prioritise embodied knowledge (Worthen and Weatherall 2024).

FIGURE 1 | Image of Iqbal from the map room conversation session reproduced with permission of the RGS-IBG.

We worked with two distinct cartographic representations, selecting the maps that emotionally 'stood out' to us. For Iqbal, this was the map titled 'India-Pakistan boundaries as fixed by the Boundary Commission 17 August 1947', which illustrated competing visions of Punjab in the wake of the formal end of the British Empire in South Asia, with the red lines representing contestation over whether it should be part of a new Pakistan, a united India or an 'Azad Punjab' (Jalal 2002, 425). However, drawing on their dual Sikh (maternal) and Muslim (paternal) heritage, which speaks to diasporic families navigating the borders of India and Pakistan, Iqbal envisioned dialogues around the 'Hindustani belt', a large landmass in present-day Northern India and Pakistan, where Hindi and Urdu evolved. The term 'Hindustan' raises contested questions of identity and belonging, particularly in the post-Partition period, as Hindi is increasingly associated with Hindus and Urdu with Muslims in South Asia and its diaspora (Lunn 2018). During the Map room conversation, Iqbal expressed feeling 'out of place', echoing their father's feelings, as they explored maps from their father's formative years, triggering discussions about their own practice of utilising creativity to explore ancestral voices and resonances. A key question concerned how they connected with the past, for example, through genealogical research. Iqbal responded by highlighting how bordering practices constrain mobility and connectivity for individuals with ties to both sides. Instead, they connected with their father's memories through music and poetry.

For Rohini, the chosen map titled, 'Sikkim & Parts of Darjeeling, Nepal & Tibet. Col. Tanner's Sketch Map, 1886', exemplified the role of imperial geography in military and mountaineering expeditions in the Himalayan region, constructing and administering it as a strategic frontier of the British Indian Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Pradhan 2020). The map illustrates how colonial border-making practices fragmented the culturally continuous landscapes inhabited by diverse communities in Sikkim-Darjeeling (India) and Nepal, turning them into 'buffer zones' marked by the yellow and blue lines. Such impositions of new boundaries disrupted Indigenous spatialities, obscuring local cosmologies within imperial narratives, with lasting effects on postcolonial identities, particularly following Sikkim's 'Merger'/annexation within India in 1975. For Rohini, engaging with the map evoked issues of identity crisis during the Map Room conversation, where a key question centred on the notion of 'absence' concerning what was not represented in the maps and thus silenced from dominant discourses. As a Nepali-speaking, Kirati Indigenous scholar from Sikkim based in the United Kingdom, the author drew on their great-great-grandfather's oral narratives to reimagine the region through the concept of diasporic indigeneity. This challenges colonial assumptions that Indigenous identity requires absolute geographic or cultural fixity, asserting instead that indigeneity is a mobile, processual identity that can be maintained even after migration within diasporic settings (Aikau 2010). The Map room session, therefore, elicited bittersweet reflections for both the authors and the audiences, which influenced the next stage of analysis (Figure 2).

In the months following the Map Room Conversations, we employed an auto-ethnographic epistolary approach to explore our affective insights into the maps (Gergan et al. 2024; McGrath et al. 2020). Following Reed-Danahay (2017), this approach dissolves the 'insider-outsider' binary, revealing tacit knowledge to uncover oppressive structures, linking theory with praxis, thereby claiming embodied knowledge through the researchers' participation as narrators and actors within social and historical contexts (Dutta 2018). Drawing on Scott (2017), the epistolary method seemed most appropriate: a means of having conversations with our families and those who have passed, with ourselves in our heads and with each other, asking questions and making observations about the emotional aftermaths of archival maps. Building on Iqbal's prior experience of using archival records to devise a therapeutic methodology that could address both 'facts' and the 'feelings' of archival encounters, letter-writing allowed us to externalise our feelings, powerfully expressing the concept of 'chosen trauma' (Singh and Lu 2025, 229–230; Volkan 1997). This can be described as the unconscious selection of shared memories of significant historical events that continue to shape

FIGURE 2 | Image of Rohini from the map room conversation session reproduced with permission of the RGS-IBG.

a group's collective identity, such that the chosen maps represent our chosen trauma. Reflective letter-writing, therefore, served as a collaborative technique, generating data on emotional and sensory aspects of maps, with the letters acting as field texts for analysis (Pithouse-Morgan et al. 2012). The letters are personal and public, addressed to one another and to readers, serving as a space to reconnect with emotions and memories and to generate a deeper understanding of maps, affect and diaspora.

1.1 | 'What Came Up for Us?'

Building on the Map Room Conversations session, this section presents our letters and the two corresponding maps, exploring how diasporic subjects engage with, resist and reinterpret colonial space-making thro ugh memory, emotion and imagination. This is explored through three interconnected themes: tracing genealogy through memory work, exploring embodied and emotional responses and asserting diasporic imagination through cartographies otherwise (Maps 1 and 2).

1.2 | The Search: Tracing Genealogy Through Memory Work

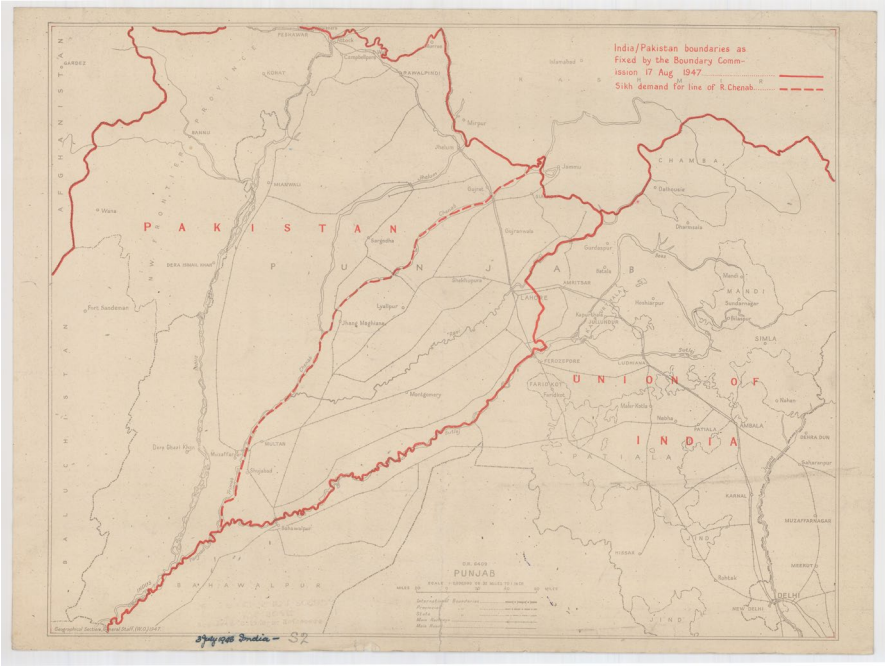
Engaging with archival maps through an epistolary approach highlighted the theme of tracing genealogical and ancestral linkages. Balkenhol (2014) states that traces are rhizomatic, connecting the past and present through memories and emotions, and can be found in cultural artefacts, such as archival maps. Genealogical tracing involves 'memory work' (Lohmeier and Pentzold 2014, 778), such as recalling ancestral stories and family histories, in which the authors memorialise their father and forefather through the letters. Iqbal traces genealogical ties to the chosen map by reinterpreting it through his father's memoir, written years after migration, first from the newly formed India to Pakistan, and then from Pakistan to post-war England,

> Like so many, you were torn between here and there. Born in 1931 in British India, in Badaun, you always fondly recalled those formative years there, before Partition and your first migration across the new border in 1955. You joined the rest of your family in Pakistan, and then in 1960, you came here, to the UK.

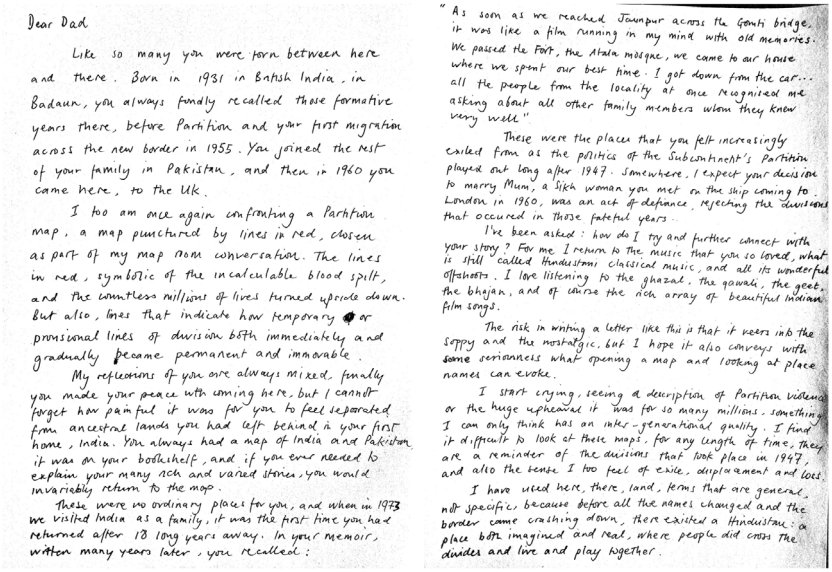
Mapping biographical journeys can be understood as a form of creative practice, linked to the idea of deep mapping, in which migrants and diasporic subjects, particularly those who have genealogically experienced displacement and exile, elicit memories of home and journeys through maps (Murrani et al. 2023). Similarly, for Rohini, genealogical tracing links visual maps to oral narratives, involving acts of remembering ancestral stories based on fluid indigenous spatial conceptions that were overshadowed by imperial cartography (Zavala Guillen 2023),

> this map reminds me of my father's stories about my great-great-grandfather, whose name we don't remember, except that he was called Cheptey Bijuwa, or the 'flat shaman' for reasons lost to memory. They say that he was the youngest among three brothers, who left our ancestral land or 'Kipat' in the indigenous Khambuwan territory of present-day Eastern Nepal, and journeyed eastward to Sikkim.

Rohini's act of remembering highlights how oral stories act as mnemonic maps, providing diasporic indigenous



MAP 1 | India–Pakistan boundaries as fixed by the Boundary Commission on 17 August 1947, RGS-IBG, rgs537838, mr India S.2. Image reproduced with permission of the RGS-IBG.



Dear Dad

Like so many you were torn between here and there. Born in 1931 in British India, in Badaun, you always fondly recalled those formative years there, before Partition and your first migration across the new border in 1955. You joined the rest of your family in Pakistan, and then in 1960 you came here, to the UK.

I too am once again confronting a Partition map, a map punctured by lines in red, chosen as part of my map room conversation. The lines in red, symbolic of the incalculable blood spilt, and the countless millions of lives turned upside down. But also, lines that indicate how temporary or provisional lines of division both immediately and gradually became permanent and immovable.

My reflections of you are always mixed, finally you made your peace with coming here, but I cannot forget how painful it was for you to feel separated from ancestral lands you had left behind in your first home, India. You always had a map of India and Pakistan in your bookshelf, and if you ever needed to explain your many rich and varied stories, you would invariably return to the map.

These were no ordinary places for you, and when in 1973 we visited India as a family, it was the first time you had returned after 18 long years away. In your memoirs, written many years later, you recalled:

"As soon as we reached Jaunpur across the Gomti bridge, it was like a film running in my mind with old memories. We passed the Fort, the Atala mosque, we came to our house where we spent our best time. I got down from the car... all the people from the locality at once recognized me asking about all other family members whom they knew very well"

These were the places that you felt increasingly exiled from as the politics of the Subcontinent's Partition played out long after 1947. Somewhere, I expect your decision to marry Mum, a Sikh woman you met on the ship coming to London in 1960, was an act of defiance, rejecting the divisions that occured in those fateful years.

I've been asked: how do I try and further connect with your story? For me I return to the music that you so loved, what is still called Hindustani classical music, and all its wonderful offshoots. I love listening to the ghazal, the qawali, the geet, the bhajan, and of course the rich array of beautiful Indian film songs.

The risk in writing a letter like this is that it veers into the soppy and the nostalgic, but I hope it also conveys with some seriousness what opening a map and looking at place names can evoke.

I start crying, seeing a description of Partition violence or the huge upheaval it was for so many millions. something I can only think has an inter-generational quality. I find it difficult to look at these maps, for any length of time, they are a reminder of the divisions that took place in 1947, and also the tense I too feel of exile, displacement and loss.

I have used here, there, land, terms that are general, not specific, because before all the names changed and the border came crashing down, there existed a Hindustan: a place both imagined and real, where people did cross the divides and live and play together.

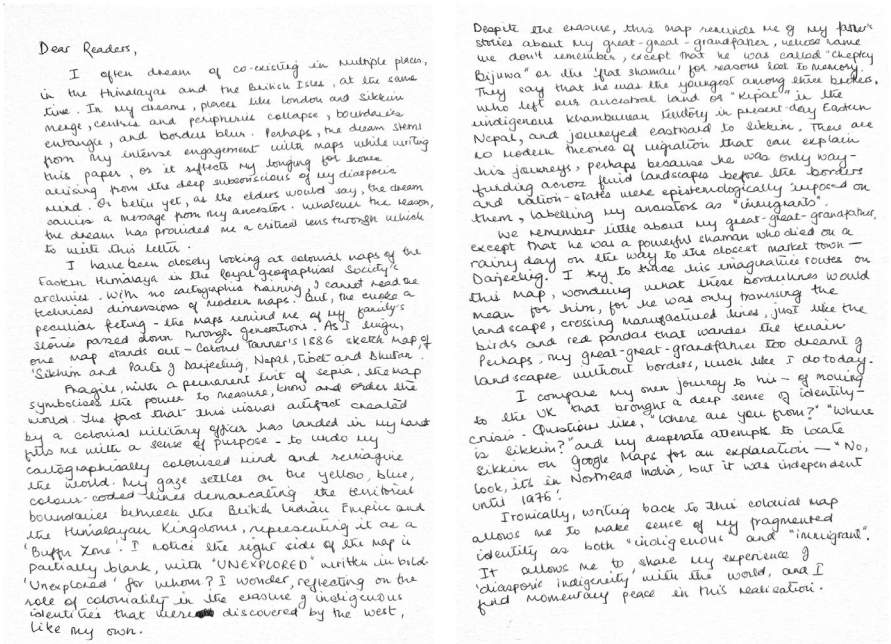
Letter 1 by Iqbal.

MAP 2 | Sikkim & Parts of Darjeeling, Nepal & Tibet. Col. Tanner's Sketch Map, 1886, RGS-IBG, K32492.

communities with a foundation for establishing and legitimising connections to their land and ancestors after migration (Aikau 2010). Through memoirs and oral stories, both letters invoke post-memories by tracing the routes of journeys they have not experienced firsthand, but through familial, intergenerational and genealogical narratives that disrupt colonial cartographies (Balkenhol 2014). In genealogical tracing, both letters allude to nostalgia marked by an inability to connect with a place or time that no longer exists. However, nostalgia is linked to the experience of longing itself, rather than to the recovery of a lost origin (Hirsch and Miller 2011), such that diasporic nostalgia involves the aestheticisation of memories, allowing remembering to unfold as a counter-practice (Quayson 2013).

1.3 | The Response: Embodiment and Affect

Within the postcolonial condition, the past keeps coming back to haunt the present and affect allows us to 'host the ghost' (Cooppan 2019, 398). Tracing genealogy involves affective encounters, in which letter-writing captured emotional and physical responses to colonial maps, yielding insights that arose from the body and emotions rather than simply the mind (McGrath



Dear Readers,

I often dream of co-existing in multiple places, in the Himalayas and the British Isles, at the same time. In my dreams, places like London and Sikkim merge, centres and peripheries collapse, boundaries entangle, and borders blur. Perhaps, the dream stems from my intense engagement with maps while writing this paper, or it reflects my longing for home arising from the deep subconscious of my diasporic mind. Or better yet, as the elders would say, the dream carries a message from my ancestors. Whatever the reason, the dream has provided me a critical lens through which to write this letter.

I have been closely looking at colonial maps of the Eastern Himalaya in the Royal Geographical Society's archives. With no cartographic training, I cannot read the technical dimensions of modern maps. But, the evoke a peculiar feeling - the maps remind me of my family's stories passed down through generations. As I begin, one map stands out - Colonel Tanner's 1886 sketch map of 'Sikhim and Parts of Darjeeling, Nepal, Tibet and Bhutan'. Fragile, with a permanent tint of sepia, the map symbolises the power to measure, know and order the world. The fact that this visual artifact created by a colonial military officer has landed in my hand fills me with a sense of purpose - to undo my cartographically colonised mind and reimagine the world. My gaze settles on the yellow, blue, colour-coded lines demarcating the territorial boundaries between the British Indian Empire and the Himalayan Kingdoms, representing it as a 'Buffer Zone'. I notice the right side of the map is partially blank, with 'UNEXPLORED' written in bold. 'Unexplored' for whom? I wonder, reflecting on the role of coloniality in the erasure of indigenous identities that were discovered by the West, like my own.

Despite the erasure, this map reminds me of my father's stories about my great-great-grandfather, whose name we don't remember, except that he was called 'Chepfey Bijuwa' or the 'fat shaman' for reasons lost to memory. They say that he was the youngest among three brothers, who left our ancestral land of "Kipat" in the indigenous Khambuwan territory in present-day Eastern Nepal, and journeyed eastward to Sikkim. There are no modern theories of migration that can explain his journeys, perhaps because he was only way-finding across fluid landscapes before the borders and nation-states were epistemologically imposed on them, labelling my ancestors as "immigrants".

We remember little about my great-great-grandfather, except that he was a powerful shaman who died on a rainy day on the way to the closest market town — Darjeeling. I try to trace his imaginaries routes on this map, wondering what these boundaries would mean for him, for he was only traversing the landscape, crossing manufactured lines, just like the birds and red pandas that wander the terrain. Perhaps, my great-great-grandfather too dreamt of landscapes without borders, much like I do today.

I compare my own journey to his - of moving to the UK that brought a deep sense of identity-crisis. Questions like, "where are you from?" "where is Sikkim?" and my desperate attempts to locate Sikkim on Google Maps for an explanation — "No, look, it's in Northeast India, but it was independent until 1976".

Ironically, writing back to this colonial map allows me to make sense of my fragmented identity as both "indigenous" and "immigrant". It allows me to share my experience of 'diasporic indigeneity' with the world, and I find momentary peace in this realisation.

Letter 2 by Rohini.

et al. 2020). For Iqbal, this involved confronting feelings of displacement, loss and grief linked to the violence of Partition that the map triggered,

> I start crying, seeing a description of Partition violence or the huge upheaval it was for so many millions, something I can only think has an inter-generational quality. I find it difficult to look at these maps, for any length of time, they are a reminder of the divisions that took place in 1947, and also the sense I too feel of exile, displacement and loss.

Iqbal's affective response to the map highlights 'chosen trauma' (Singh and Lu 2025; Volkan 1997), where the map reflects the inner turmoil of those who made the journey and those left behind, transforming 'old ways of belonging' (Zamindar 2007, 13). Here, connections to ancestral lands were so strong, and displacement so unsettling, causing people to recall intergenerational attachments to specific places long after Partition (Pandey 1999). For Rohini, the affective responses involved anger and unease caused by silences and erasures of indigenous identities and worldviews through colonial bordering practices,

> I notice that the right side of the map is partially blank, with 'UNEXPLORED' written in bold. 'Unexplored' for whom? I wonder, reflecting on the role of coloniality in the erasure of Indigenous identities that were discovered by the West, like my own.

Here, the violence is affective and psychological, arising not from a specific event but from historical absence, the condition of being a 'background' in master narratives, showing how archival maps operate through the logic of selective memories that create identity crises, primarily experienced by Indigenous communities, who are subsumed within larger ethnic, racialised and national categories (Delugan 2010). The letters evoke a symptomatic reading, focusing on archival omissions to uncover historical erasures and ongoing exclusions (Asoni 2025, 3). However, confronting maps with intergenerational significance also enabled the release of suppressed emotions, the processing of unprocessed thoughts and the externalisation of feelings, which supports self-assertion. This transformed the maps into 'memoryscapes' (Murrani et al. 2023, 1306), or psychological spaces of recovery, shifting the narrative from victimisation to ownership and restoration.

1.4 | The Reimagining: Diasporic Agency and Cartographies Otherwise

The affective activation of genealogical memories sparked imaginations of cartographies otherwise (Oslender 2021), where diasporic subjects assert agency and actively challenge routine ways of mapping the world. This prompts us to unsee and reimagine spatial possibilities beyond Eurocentric narratives, employing embodied, sensory and emotive practices, such as art, poetry, dance, music, stories and dreams (Cooppan 2019). For Iqbal, this involves genealogical remapping through the lens of syncretic Hindustani musical traditions,

> For me I return to the music that you so loved, what is still called Hindustani classical music, and all its wonderful offshoots. I love listening to the ghazal, the qawali, the geet, the bhajan, and of course the rich array of beautiful Indian film songs.

Iqbal's reimagination of a region shaped by violent bordering practices that formed India and Pakistan is articulated through a vision of oneness stemming from fluid music traditions, symbolising the 'heteroglot' world in which their father grew up,

specifically the Hindi-Urdu heartlands (Rai 2001, x). Here, the meaning of 'Hindustan' is not derived from colonial or nationalist spatialities but from the hybrid 'Hindustani' music, rooted in multiplicity and vernacular cosmopolitanism (Kapuria 2017). For Rohini, the affective engagement with colonial maps led to a geographical reimagination rooted in interconnectedness stemming from her dreamscape,

> I try to trace his imaginative routes on this map, wondering what these borderlines would mean for him, for he was only traversing the landscape, crossing manufactured lines, just like the birds and red pandas that wander the terrain. Perhaps my great-great-grandfather, too, dreamt of landscapes without borders, much like I do today.

Rohini's reimagination highlights that Indigenous mapping often merges the tangible and spiritual, where dreams guide the cartographic process, revealing what Hirt (2012, 6) calls the 'Indigenous depth of place'. This highlights indigenous cosmopolitanism, or a worldly ideal defined not by stereotypical notions of 'native fixity' but by diasporic worldviews shaped by contact, encounters and interactions (Delugan 2010). This creates new forms of inclusive belonging grounded in a relational ontology that transcends the colonial-national borders imposed on Indigenous lands, reformulated through the fluid term 'Himalaya' that no single nation-state can contain. Thus, by reimagining 'Hindustan' and 'Himalaya', we perform an act of 're-membering', or 'putting together again' (Oslender 2021, 4), alternative geographical imaginations and new political horizons, which disorient the dominant cartographic gaze and re-centre multiple diasporic worldviews.

2 | Conclusion

Following the Map Room Conversations session, this paper examined maps and diaspora through an affective lens. Using archival maps of 'Hindustan' (1947) and 'Himalaya' (1886), we showed how colonial space-making practices and their postcolonial articulations continue to shape diasporic subjectivities (Quayson 2013). By posing the therapeutic prompt, 'What came up for you?', we as diasporic subjects adopted an autoethnographic epistolary method to write back to colonial representations through embodied and affective engagements. These elicited suppressed memories, expressed difficult emotions, and asserted agency through alternative geographical imaginings. By bringing together two diasporic subjects and two distinct cartographic representations in conversation, we propose key interventions centred on two elements: maps and letters. We show that maps are not merely visual representations but active mediators that translate marginalised memories, emotions and imaginations (Awan 2016). Through creative engagements, maps act as 'go-betweens' by bringing diverse bodies and emotions together, translating conversations and catalysing action among diasporic subjects. If maps are mediators, we argue that letter-writing is the primary tool for this mediation, enabling the performativity of memories through action-based modes of remembering. The letters convey the visceral and affective experiences of engaging with archival maps that hold genealogical significance for diasporic subjects. By releasing difficult emotions and recalling ancestral memories, the epistolary approach can also serve as a therapeutic tool for restoration and reclamation of marginalised identities (Murrani et al. 2023). Thus, we highlight the performative and affective dimensions of engaging with archival maps, which may enable diasporic subjects to acknowledge their fragmentation and articulate complex, contested identities.

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study that include historical maps are available from the Royal Geographical Society—with the Institute of British Geographers. Restrictions may apply to the availability of these data, which may be under licence. Data are used by the authors with the permission of the Royal Geographical Society—with the Institute of British Geographers.

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