



Schism of Women and Society in Amrita Pritam's 'Pinjar'

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ABSTRACT: The research paper recce the gender suffering experience of partition. Division of British India into the independent countries of India and Pakistan led to population transfer of unprecedented magnitude, accompanied by devastating communal violence. Partition was also one of the most bloody events. Amrita Pritam's Pinjar probe into the complex theme of psychological and intellectual derangement of women, which effects the mentally and sexually. The present paper flings the suffering of women in Amrita Pritam's partition classic Pinjar (the skeleton) that highlights women suffering exploitation and sacrifices because of their dislocation and abduction during partition.

KEYWORDS: Gender, Women, Derangement, Amrita Pritam, Sexual

INTRODUCTION:

The persistence of violence against women is deeply rooted in entrenched systems of sexism and patriarchy that permeate culture.

The novels written by Kishwar Desai ' Witness the Night' and 'Origin of Love' and A Kabuliwala's Bengali Wife by Susmita Banerjee addresses issues of violence best on gender.

Amrita Pritam's Pinjar is a shattering blow to the ascendancy of patriarchal set up where women's body is considered as a site of contest and her loyalty is constantly questioned thereby subjecting her physical agony and mental derangement.

The present paper focuses upon the different elements of violence and their impact on the female protagonist Puro, who grapples through the pain of abduction, gender violence and displacement. The novel is a saga of suffering and violence not only against Puro but for the entire womankind.

Pinjar is a gripping tale of love, loss and resilience set during the partition of India , where Puro's journey reveals the complexity of human relationship and shoddy norms for women.

Pinjar tells the story of Puro, a young woman of Hindu background, finding herself living a lovely life - in a period circling the time of the Partition of 1947 - with her family. All is well for Puro, who finds herself betrothed to a wealthy, sweet young man, Ramchand, from a promising family akin to her own background. Although her life seems to be well-charted, Puro's bliss is shattered one day as a leisurely trip in the fields beyond her home with Rajjo turns traumatic as she is kidnapped by a mysterious man, who turns out to be Rashid, a man of Muslim descent. Rashid's family was once scorned by Puro's when in a few generations before theirs', a Great-some-Uncle of Puro's kidnapped a Great-some-Aunt of Rashid's. Now, vengeance has been proclaimed by Rashid's Uncles, and have finally triumphed by successfully capturing Puro. Throughout the film it is clear that Rashid is very attracted to Puro and would do anything for her. It can also be perceived that he did not want to kidnap Puro, but was forced to do so for the honor of his family.

One late evening while Rashid is out, Puro manages to break free the lock that entraps her in Rashid's home, and runs back to her parents. However in an extremely emotional scene, her parents woefully turn away their daughter, explaining that if Puro were to stay, Rashid's family would slaughter their own. Left with no support at home (Puro's brother Trilok is unfortunately away from home at that time), Puro returns to Rashid (who has already explained 15 days after the kidnapping that her family would in no way accept her then) who is well-aware of Puro's escape. Some months following Puro's kidnapping, Puro's family forces themselves to move on and now marries their son Trilok to Puro's ex-fiance's sister, Lajjo. Lajjo wishes very much for Trilok to give her the attention she so animately bestows upon him. However, Trilok, having turned cold ever since his sister's capture, cannot find himself get attached to Lajjo. Parallel to the celebrations of the new marriage, is a celebration of Rashid: Puro is pregnant. While Rashid and his aunts rejoice, Puro finds herself horribly depressed, and purposely strains herself in household work in order to miscarry. After the miscarriage, however, Puro learns somewhat of Rashid's love for her. One day Puro walks dangerously close to the fields (that belong to Ramchand, her supposed-to-be husband) where she herself was kidnapped, and gets to see him just last time. But Ramchand is so much surprised to see her semi-covered face that by the time he starts realising it is Puro, she clears off leaving him in doubt. It may be perceived that she does so after getting disappointed to find Ramchand not quite recognising her. Chaos ensues again for Puro's family as warfare occurs between the Hindus and Muslims, as the Republic of India finds itself liberated from Britain. As Muslims and Hindus flee from opposing sides for safety, Lajjo gets separated from the rest of the family to get kidnapped some time later by one Muslim boy. Puro after knowing that Ramchand's village's Hindus are passing by her own place, decides to visit the night camp where locals go to give food etc. There she meets Ramchand who woefully tells her of Lajjo's situation. Puro begs Rashid to help her find Lajjo and rescue her, as Puro reminds Rashid that if he indeed has a heart, he will realize that it is not too late for Lajjo to be saved. As Puro underwent a ceremony to be branded - literally - as a Muslim, and be renamed Hamida, Lajjo had not as yet. Racing from home to home under the alias of a saleswoman, Puro finally finds Lajjo, and with Rashid's assistance meets Rajjo and brother Ramchand at a Refugee camp, where Hindus and Muslims who found themselves in situations similar to Puro's and Lajjo's were finally allowed freedom and guarantees of safety. Lajjo is welcomed lovingly by Ramchand, Trilok is also there in the camp who meets his sister Puro and explains her that she can finally return & Ramchand is ready to accept her even now. However Puro surprises Trilok and the audience by explaining that she is where she belongs - with Rashid. His dedication to helping her save Lajjo proved how much he indeed did love Puro, and for that Puro finds she can finally return his love. And so in an ironic twist of fate, Puro seeks Rashid out in the camp and the two bid Ramchand, Trilok, and Lajjo farewell, forever.

Through the characters; Puro, Lajo, Taro, Kammo Amrita tries to unveil the facets of violence against women and her trauma. Here Amrita highlights the fact that women had to constantly prove their innocence and assert their right to dignity in our patriarchal society.

Another form of violence against women portrayed in the novel is the parading a women naked through the village and towns. One such incident is mentioned in the novel, where a young girl was paraded naked, "One day Puro saw that a young girl was paraded naked while ten youths in the form of procession accompanied by drum passed by their village..." (p. 91)

There is another women character, who was sexually assaulted and becomes pregnant. The woman was mad and was not even aware of the violence inflicted on her body and a child growing in her. There were many women who were mutilated and impregnated during the tremulous time of partition.

The agony of the child forcibly planted in their womb is the reverberation of Puro's hatred towards Rashid and her foetus. Puro's awareness of the fact that a life is growing within her haunts and torments her. Puro is not only physically, emotionally violated but she's been violated mentally also. Amrita Pritam voices the trauma of rape through the symbol of mother's womb which has become the victim of violence.

The novel depicts different dimensions of violence against women; on religious, social and most prominently physical and mental levels. Amrita Pritam through her violated women characters in the novel brings forth the fact that women have been the prime victims in every communal strife, riots and wars. "It has been quite disturbing experience all over the world that any conflict, a war, civil strife, communal riots or disturbance women and children became the prime victims of violence. Children are orphaned and women are not only widowed but also become victim of rape and abduction"

Whether it was Puro or Hamida, Lajo, Taro, Kammo or the mad women or the naked women, woman becomes the 'other' not only during partition even today. That 'other' whose lives did not matter, whose voices are silenced, whose identities were subjugated and who remained at the periphery of power struggle and power equation and continue to be marginalized and displaced at the cost of the self. Pinjar thus gives a voice to this 'other' and their concerns of displacement, marginalization, dual identity and powerlessness.

Women's suffering can be felt by these lines said by Amrita:

It was a double life. Puro became Hamida by day and turned back Puro by night. In reality she was neither Hamida nor Puro; she was just a skeleton, without a shape or a name."

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