

“PINJAR” BY AMRITHA PRITAM: UNRAVELLING THE SPIRITS OF WOMANHOOD, JUXTAPOSING THE ELEMENTS VICTIMIZATION AND VIOLENCE

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Abstract: The novel “Pinjar” by Amrita Pritam, depicts the optimistic part of the womanhood. Women are always the soft targets during any kind of chaotic situations, partition (1947 Punjab partition) which led to communal discrepancies are no exception to this, but even at such situations women tend to be emotionally strong enough to face the situation with all wit and intelligence. The protagonist of this novel is a woman named Puro, she is the major character who shapes all the other characters. Puro’s life is not a bed of roses, she has to face many atrocities waged by the male dominated society. In spite of all the odds, Puro tends to become a brave and a heroic character, where in she tends to save lives of the other helpless women like Lajjo, Tara, Kammo and insane girl. Hence, to substantiate, this paper is an attempt to show that women even at the worst of situations, try to empower other women, the humanitarian values and ethics gets implemented due to the strong stance that Puro embarks.

Keywords: Atrocity, Communal Discrepancy, Empower, Humanitarian Value, Male Domination, Partition.

Introduction: Historically when we view the wars and violence of the world, women have always been a soft target and it is clearly evident that women are always victims of war atrocities. This strain of pain was no exception to the partition that took place during the independence, when India got its independence partition was the biggest menace it had to face, and Punjab was the worst to suffer. Among them women became an easy target, many Hindu and Muslim women had to face the atrocities waged by the male dominated society. This strain of violence and victimization is portrayed in the novel Pinjar by Amrita Preetam, the protagonist of the novel Puro is the most worst sufferer in the backdrop of partition. Though she faces the subjugation of male dominance she tries to help and empower other women who are engulfed in similar situations, she strongly voices her opinion and saves the lives of other women like Lajjo, Kammo, Tara and a mad girl, Puro born to an orthodox Hindu family along with Trilok her brother, and Rajjo her younger sister, she is in all bliss when her marriage is fixed with Ramchand of a neighbouring village but soon her life gets a tragic turn when she is abducted by a Muslim man Rashid, she is in terrible pain and as she is captivated by a man, who used to stalk her and finally tries to rape her. Even her parents are helpless of her situation as the panchayath [dominated by both Hindu and Muslim men] gives a verdict that, Puro had to remain with Rashid as her uncle had sided with a Muslim woman of Rashid’s family and it was Rashid’s relatives who pressurized him to abduct Puro and start a family with her, she even tries to escape from the clutches of Rashid and reaches her parents, but her helpless parents do not allow her to enter the house as they did not want to go against the verdict. Puro even tries to commit suicide, but Rashid saves her from all odds, they start a family after all dominance. But the most striking and mind boggling reality is though Puro has been subjected to violence and has been the victim to the atrocities of patriarchy, she tries to save the lives of other women, she doesn’t hold any grudges and possess negativity she empowers other women who are engulfed in the clutches of men.

Analysis and Interpretation: Puro first saves a Hindu madwoman who had been abused physically only for the minutes of pleasure as she is an easy target, she nurtures the baby born to an insane woman. The harsh reality is when the baby is snatched from Puro due to ego clashes of communities, Hamida [Puro] shows all the humanitarian qualities, she even saves the life of Kammo and Tara. The novel narrates the tragic context as follows—“Hamida’s [Puro] ears burned with rage when she heard of the abduction of Hindu girls by Muslims and of Muslim girls by Hindus. Some had been forced into marriage, some murdered, some stripped and paraded naked in the streets” [34].

Puro asks a direct rhetorical question to Rashida—“If my uncle abducted your aunt, what fault was that of mine?” [8]. Women’s body rationally becomes an easy target, in the words of Ivekovic and Mostov argue—“In the acts of war...communist rape, women are the instruments of communication between two groups of men” [11].

Puro gets married to Rashida after her family refuse to accept her, and the rational excuse that she will never be married to anyone as she has lost her religion “birthright” [10]. Puro becomes Hamida the change is not that easy. It make a deep mark on the psyche of Puro, and the reality is that Rashida is now her husband and future, it wouldn't change the fact that —“He had robbed her of her future” [9]. The change from being Puro to Hamida is an intense psychological term. Pritam writes—“It was a double life. Hamida by day, Puro by night. In reality she was neither one nor the other; she was just a skeleton without a shape or a name” [11].

The image of the naked madwoman in Pinjar, is very much similar to Manto's Toba Tek Singh trying to accuse the insanity feature of the war across the border. The vigour of men have not even left the madwoman who is “neither young nor attractive; she is just a lump of flesh without a mind to go with it...a living skeleton...a lunatic skeleton...a skeleton picked to its bones by kites and vultures” [22]. In her final gesture to her brother, she says—“Whether one is a Hindu girl or a Muslim one, whosoever reaches her destination, she carries along my soul also” [50], many of the critics are of the opinion that Pinjar, depicts the womanhood which shows the bond they show emotionally where in they are connected. In the words of Urvashi Butalia, one can spot various maternal figures such as Puro's mother and Kamo's aunt who holds the patriarchal status quo. When given the last chance to return to her family, Puro exercises her ethics and decides to remain as Rashida's wife. In her last gesture to her brother, she says—“Whether one is a Hindu girl or a Muslim one, whosoever reaches her destination, she carries along my soul also” [50].

Conclusion: The women in Pinjar bond with each other is regardless of their religious faith and incarnate oneness in a composition of diverse parts in the real sense of the word. As Kavita Daiya suggests, Pinjar poses a difficult task the communalist production of clash between the Hindus and Muslims as “always already a site of conflict” [175]. It throws a light on the gendered experience of the Partition offering the ways to read the postulates of sameness by women subjects which are not necessarily taken or drive due to religious dominance, but more strikingly, determine and condition by cultural and psychosocial factors as well as their own feel of intense emotional injury and sometimes, within the final restoration in addition to their belief. Hence, to substantiate the claim that women tend to show all humanitarian values and grounds at the time of crisis, the spirits of womanhood is brought in when their is a threat to women who is suffering in the similar context. Puro excels as a woman with wit and intelligence, endowed with all humanitarian qualities the harsh tragedy unravels at the end of the novel, when Puro's family wants her back as she was helpful in saving her sister-in-law Lajjo, her brother Trilok urges her to come home. But ironically she rejects his offer and lives with Rasheed who has been very supportive in all her endeavours, she again show the moral and emotional etiquette where in she says that “He is her future” which shows how attached women tend to be even after so many atrocities wedged against them.

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