



Experience of Sufferings in Partition in Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar*

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Abstract

The word 'partition' is a noun that means the act or process of dividing something into parts, or the state of being so divided or fragmented. Partition novels boldly speak on human cruelty. Such a novel snatches the naked dark truth of independence. The partition novels are full of sexual exploitation. These novels expose human demons. These novels cover a large period of the century and hence will render a wider perspective of the largest man-made migration in the history of mankind. In this way, the partition narrator brings out the holocaust of partition. The partition work is about men and women who become victims of the partition. They suffered from incredible harassment, torture, and undesirable atrocities. The state of Punjabi speakers and Urdu speakers mostly become victims of the separation. This literature roughly analyses the hidden demons inside humans. It teaches us the truth and moral values of life also. It provides a chance to ignore our past mistakes in the present time.

Keywords: partition, sufferings, culture, abduction, humiliation

Partition has evoked a great body of work, in literature, art, and films. Historians, political analysts, and social scientists have since put forward heart-rending and mind-boggling chronological accounts of when, why, what, and how of the tragedy and there is no dearth of authentic records available on the subject, written at different times. History, however, becomes an inadequate medium for reading human suffering and division. History deals with ordinary people whose countries and their communities were once divided into two or many parts for a forgotten long time. Amrita Pritam was the first prominent Punjabi woman novelist. She wrote novels and essays. She was famous for her short stories, autobiographies, and poems. *Pinjar* is a short novel written by Amrita Pritam originally in Punjabi. In 2009, *Pinjar*



was translated by Khushwant Singh into English. The novel depicts the conditions and nature of Indian society during the partition of India in 1947. Amrita Pritam has poured her own experiences into the novel. She beautifully portrays the women's lives in the partition period. The account is told from the character Puro's viewpoint. This story is a unique glance at the Indian partition. *Pinjar* represents the harrowing situation of women. It is a tale of human mistakes which exploit man's misfortunes. It is a narration of a woman dishonour situation where a woman was thrown away from her family if she was molested by someone before marriage. If any mad person or a group of people forcefully broke the purity of a girl then no one accepts her.

Pinjar is a heart-touching story about how conflicts between families, communities, and nations are so often brutal. The novel describes the male-dominated nature of society during that period and how women were bound to accept the decisions. The novel uses historical elements to set off a fictional tale that effectively demonstrates the victim's reality. Novelist depicts the picture of women victims with incidents that had taken place during Partition. *Pinjar* depicts a world of social reality which draws its meaning from the description of experienced reality. The story revolves around a Hindu girl who belongs to a family of moneylenders. Through this character, the author depicts how the women of the twentieth century were bound to accept their conditions calling it their fate. The novel is successful in implanting the anguish and terror of the partition of India in the minds of the readers. The novel is quite interesting and creates a picture of Indian society. The various descriptions, for instance, traditional or religious hymns sung by the women during the birth of the heroine's brother, the various arrangements made for the heroine's marriage, giggling and teasing of the heroine's friends, the mother's sorrow of losing her daughter, shows and create the sense of typical Indian society in the reader's mind.

In the major part of the first half of the novel, we find that Puro's family is a happy family of two sisters and a brother. She is an obedient and ideal daughter, the darling of her parents. Her father, like all fathers, associates the idea of family honor with women of the family. The turning point in the story arrives when Puro is abducted by Rashid, who is forced to do it, to avenge a similar act committed by Puro's uncle, thus, portraying how conflicts between families, communities, and nations are so often brutally and mindlessly played out on the bodies and identities of women. Rashid is a decent guy, he does not assault Puro. She, after a long struggle, manages to escape and goes home but is shockingly told by her father that



there is no place for her in the family as she had been abducted which now puts her chastity and fidelity into question. Since she is abducted by a Muslim man, it is taken for granted that, she is not chaste anymore. But, Rashid does not rape her. Puro pleads before her parents for her acceptance claiming that Rashid has not done her any harm sexually but, to her dismay, she is rejected straightaway. Her father refused to accept her reiterating that it would prove difficult for him to face up to the queries of the society in which he thrived. Rejection from her own family is another trauma that hits her hard.

Devastated and dejected, Puro ultimately returns to Rashid, to lead a hellish life. Her identity undergoes a drastic change. Rashid forces marriage on her and transforms her into Hamida from Puro. She now has a new identity which she resists as she longs for her family and marriage to Ramchand. On the other hand, Rashid is repentant for the crime of Puro's abduction and seeks redemption. He tries to provide love and care to Puro but she is unrelenting as the wounds inflicted by Rashid are unforgivable. Over time, Puro aka Hamida comes in contact with three females who were also the victims of gendered violence. All three characters are treated merely as bodies, not humans. Tara is suffering from some unknown disease and is disowned by her husband who has brought another woman to live with him and forces her to become a prostitute. Her illness and her husband's attitude towards her are unbearable. She desires death to free her from the caged life. She suffers from pangs of loneliness as her family abandons her to live a life with a stranger, with no scope of seeing them again. It is like a rebirth with a new identity. Rashid marries Puro. She bears a son to Rashid. At the beginning of the novel, the novelist mentions Puro's disgust over having Rashid's child. She is utterly traumatized by the thought of carrying his child in her womb.

A greater blow of pain than her kidnapping was rejection. Puro's persona drastically changes. Through marriage, she was changed into Hamida, who is a "skeleton" without a soul. Puro is a young Hindu woman who is forced to live with Rashid and his family. She is subjected to physical and emotional abuse, and her identity is constantly questioned. The novel explores the themes of identity, gender, and religion in a society that is deeply divided along these lines. Through Puro's experiences, Pritam highlights the struggles of women who are caught in the crossfire of communal violence. She shows how women are often used as pawns in the larger political game and how their lives are shaped by the prejudices of their communities. Pinjar is a powerful commentary on the human cost of war and conflict and a reminder that women's voices must be heard if we are to build a more just and equitable society. They serve



only as a symbol of sex for the gratification of men. Amrita Pritam treated the novel's delicate subject matter with the utmost care because she appreciated its significance. She elaborates on the entire situation at the time. Many women lost their husbands or children, and others were kidnapped and sexually assaulted. The widespread fervor among communities before the partition provided an additional benefit. It had been decided that Rashid, from the Shaikh family, would play a role in leaving an indelible impression on the Sahukars. He was forced to swear on The Quran that he would abduct Puro before her wedding to settle old scores.

When Puro learns one day from Ramchand that his sister, Lajo, who is now her brother's wife, has been kidnapped in a nearby village, the novel carves out a very powerful image of a woman during partition. Immediately, Puro decides to find Lajo so that she won't have to experience the same bitterness and dejection that Puro did because her family and society rejected her based on societal norms. This is the result of Puro's suppressed anger towards her family and society. To track down Lajo, she decides to go from village to village as a saleswoman (bunker). She subtly inquires about the girl and learns who she is from the people. Then, despite all the so-called feminine laws of fragility, she manages to bring her back to her house after devising a plan for her escape from the kidnappers. By doing this, Puro asserts that women who were kidnapped during the partition were victims of intergroup strife at the hands of men rather than the criminals who were supposed to be hated by society.

The novel provides a harrowing account of how women were subjected to rape, abduction, and forced marriage. It highlights the fact that women's bodies were used as tools of power and control by men who sought to assert their dominance over them. The partition not only resulted in the physical separation of people but also created a deep divide between different communities based on religious and cultural differences. This led to the creation of two separate nations, India and Pakistan, which continue to struggle with issues related to identity, nationalism, and communalism.

The partition of India, which was the result of some fundamentalist religious people, was mainly done to create two new countries to satiate the basic desires of a few men. It was the consequences of some manipulative minds that not only divided two nations but also ripped apart human sentiments. Had it not happened; there would have been no partition and no gruesome events of robbery, kidnapping, murder, and rape that took place abundantly and incessantly. The episode of partition is an ugly blot on the face of our nation that cannot be wiped out easily, it will require ages of sincere toil and dedicated effort to save humanity



from the clutches of extinction. Pakistani historian Ayesha Jalal has termed the moment as a moment that has neither beginning nor end. *Pinjar* (The Skeleton) is a saga of the helplessness of women and the struggle for survival of the individual amidst the socio-political and cultural forces. The novel highlights the ugly side of the hidden social evils and also the bitterness of the upheavals due to communal disparities.

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