



Amrita Pritam's "Pinjar": Gender Violence Against Women

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Women's suffering has long been silenced and suppressed in India, where patriarchy predominates. Being colonized by the British and the males of their own country, women were subjected to double subjugation. The dominant authority views women as the postcolonial "other" or as something to be subjugated. A nation with a great range of cultures, India has allowed the British to thoroughly and culturally dominate the country. The British utilized the division and rule method as a tactic to succeed in this situation. The friendship persisted even though its cultural and religious differences collapsed in part due to this separation of consciousness among the people. Because of this, during the war, the British sown seeds of rivalry and hatred planted in people's thoughts grew, resulting in murder and slaughter. Amrita, according to Pooja Priyamvada, "became the first Punjabi woman writer to step out from under the shadow of the contemporary male writers and carve her niche in Punjabi literature." She embodied revolution, not simply a poet (Priyamvada). The most well-known novel of Amrita Pritam's on the partition is perhaps Pinjar.

Women's experiences, particularly about their political and economic standing, are the primary driving force behind or inspiring a wide range of social movements, political actions, and philosophical viewpoints that constitute feminism. Regarding racism as a human behaviour, the central focus is on restricting or eliminating equality between the sexes and supporting the problems with women's rights and inequalities in society.

Feminism has expanded throughout time, and while its critiques of male-dominated society are necessary to address some injustices, a more realistic, just, and humane perspective on other people is still crucial. Peter Barry writes in *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* one of the primary functions of feminist critics is: "Rethinking the canon, aiming at the discovery of texts written by women." (Barry134). Every aspect of feminist theory challenges the fundamental ideas of gender, sexuality, and the term "women" as a structural noun; however, some are more focused on challenging the traditional male/female division. While most feminist social movements support women's rights, interests and concerns, specific feminist theories take women's significance for given and offer in-depth analysis and critique of gender inequality. Every type of racism has particular standards and requirements for providing women's rights, and many different types of xenophobia exist.

The philosophy of feminism is not the same. Over time, there have been several variations of feminist theory. While radical feminism contends that the only way to overcome sexism is by abolishing the concept of gender, liberal feminism is sometimes seen as the origin of all feminist theories. Although Cultural Feminism refers to the idea that men and women have different reactions to the world around them, Socialist Feminism asserts that patriarchy supports and perpetuates gender-based institutions since males are now in positions of power and money.

Since the Vedic era, the female body has been a contentious topic in India. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are Hindu epics that have historically exploited women. In the social, political, religious, or domestic arenas, violence against women may be of a mental or physical character. In her book *Pinjar*, Amrita Pritam described the anguish and suffering associated with gendered experiences of the partition (1950). The work accurately depicts violence against women both before and after the 1947 partition of India. It portrays the hardship of women, their oppression, and the agony of the abusers, whether in the name of tradition, religion, or societal standards. *Pinjar* was translated into English as "The Skeleton" by Khushwant Singh. "The play of love and hate, the complexities of the human mind and above all the predicament of the abducted women are depicted in the background of the partition tragedy." (Thenmozhiand Tyagi 399). The book tells how a man of a different religion, named Rashid, kidnaps a little girl named Puro to settle a family score. It accounts for Puro's transformation from Puro to Hamida, her loss of identity, and her suffering.

The Gujarat district and adjacent towns like Chhatoani and Rattoval are highlighted in the book. The ten-year cycle that the novel covers is from 1935 to 1947. The British split united India into India and Pakistan in 1947. Puro and Ramchand villages both fell inside Pakistani sovereignty. The pre-and post-partition circumstances are the primary subject of the book. The political elites' choice to separate Hindus from Muslims is fiercely parodied in the novel. The plot changes course when Rashid, a Muslim youngster who feels compelled to seek retribution for the same atrocity perpetrated by Puro's uncle, kidnaps Puro. The

author claims that the nation has forgotten the fundamental principles upon which it was founded. Pritam shows how disputes within families, communities, and governments are frequently violently and carelessly acted out via the bodies and identities of women. The cause of her kidnapping eluded Puro's understanding. Rashid explains why the kidnapping was his desired goal. "Allah is my witness that on the very first day, I cast my eyes on you, I fell in love with you. It was my love and the prodding of the Shaikh clan that made me do this. But I cannot bear to see you so sad." (8).

Puro makes futile efforts to convince Rashid of the wickedness of taking revenge on her for the wrongdoing of her family members. Rashid lists the ethical issues that would arise from returning to her parents: "Good woman, you have no place in that family anymore! If they let you in even once, not one of their Hindu friends and relatives will take a drop of water in their house. And you have been with me for fifteen days." (8). When Puro finally escapes and returns home after much effort, her father, Mohanlal, informs her that she is not welcome because she was kidnapped, which calls into question her virginity and loyalty. Finally, the prophecy came true. "You have lost your faith and birthright. If we dare to help you, we will be cut down and finished without a trace of blood left behind to tell our faith" (23). She also experiences cruelty from her own family when they reject her. Her father is hesitant to hug her. Her fiancé Ramchand challenges her purity, modesty, and dignity by rejecting Puro's justification for her kidnapping and her father disowning Puro. She has been subjected to two forms of physical and mental abuse: first, by Rashid, who invaded her personal space by kidnapping her, and second, by her own family. "She had believed she was returning to life; she had wanted to live again, to be with her father and mother, she had come with a lot of hope. Now she had no hope, nor any fear" (16).

Puro, despondent, returns to her captor Rashid to live an almost skeleton-like life (Pinjar). Rashid compels Puro to marry her and convert to Islam, which causes a significant shift in who she is. Puro will change into Hamida. On the other hand, Rashid apologizes for kidnapping Puro and seeks redemption. Rashid attempts to bring Puro love and happiness, but Puro is unyielding because of Rashid's terrible scars. Three women, also victims of gender-based abuse, came into contact with Hamida. The three characters were not considered as people but rather as simple bodies. Being afflicted with an unidentified sickness, Taro's spouse has abandoned her. Her husband compelled her to become a prostitute and brought another lady to live with him. She wants to die to be released from prison since her condition, and her husband's treatment of her are intolerable. She says to Puro:

"What can I tell you, when a girl is given away in marriage, God deprives her of her tongue so that she may not complain. I had to sell my body for a cup of porridge and a few rags for two years. I am like a whore, a prostitute. There is no justice in the world, nor any God. He (her husband) can do what he likes. There is no God to stop him. God's fetters were for me and only for my feet". (37-38).

A motherless little girl named Kammo, whom her aunt raised since her father abandoned her, is the second female Puro (Hamida) encounters. The aunt of Kammo abuses and mistreats her. Because Kammo views Hamida as a Muslim version of her mother, her aunt forbids them from ever meeting. Hamida is aware that in all conflicts, women suffer the most casualties; "It was a sin to be alive in this world full of evil, thought Hamida. It was a crime to be born a woman" (65). The third lady is Pagali, a mentally disturbed woman ridiculed and sexually attacked by the village's aristocratic males. The lady was insane and was not even conscious of the abuse being done to her body or the kid developing inside of her.

During the turbulent time of partition, many women were disfigured and pregnant. Puro is haunted and tormented by her anger for Rashid and the developing foetus inside her. Puro is experiencing a wave of hopelessness caused by physical pressure and emotional and mental suffering. Another instance of abuse against women in the book is the absolute humiliation and parade of naked women around cities and villages. "One day, Puro saw that a young girl was paraded naked while ten youths in the form of a procession accompanied by drums passed by their village." (91). The town's ladies were passive observers of such a tragic crime, and none dared to speak louder.

The extensive attacks on women during the partition are depicted in the book. In those days, women were not secure anywhere, not even in refugee camps. Refugee camps, intended to be safe havens for women, were surrounded by military security. The author accurately describes the situation in the camps for refugees: "There was a refugee camp in the adjoining village set up for the Hindus and Sikhs. The military guarded the camp. But daily, the Muslim hooligans would come and take away young girls from the camp at night and bring them back the next morning". (91-92)

When Ramchand comes to Puro to ask for her assistance in rescuing Lajo after she is kidnapped by Muslims and held captive in her own home, Puro's predicament is repeated. Lajo is Puro's sister-in-law. Puro convinces Rashid to assist Lajo in getting home. Puro displays incredible strength at a time of need to aid Lajo in escaping her kidnappers' grasp. She succeeds in freeing Lajo with Rashid's assistance (who views this action as a kind of atonement). Lajo's family had welcomed him back, and her sister-in-law had avoided her fate, making Puro glad. Thus, Puro, at last, had an opportunity to visit her family once more. Trilok, her brother, wished for her to rejoin Lajo.

"Hamida understood what he was saying and, for a brief moment, was overcome by temptation. She knew she only had to say she was a Hindu, and they would put her on the bus and take her back to her people. Like Lajo, like thousands of other women in the country, she too could, But she made her brother release her arm, turned back to where Rashid was standing and clasped her son to her bosom."(49).

Totawad Nagnath Ramrao has opined, "Rashid changed his nature in the course of time beyond imagination and became a very kind and considerable man." (Ramrao 5). Rashid is devoted to Puro and decides to go to a new region named Sakkar to begin a new life. Rashid's family there didn't cause any issues, but Puro felt uncomfortable, like "a stray calf in a strange herd of cows" (10). Her life began to seem unreal after changing her name and being referred to as Hamida by everyone. She was living a second life. "Hamida by day, Puro by night" (11). It was very challenging for her to fully reconcile her dual existence as Puro, whose heart still yearned for her first love Ramchand, and as Hamida, the wife of Rashid and the mother of his kid. She didn't feel like she belonged in her dual life and thought of herself as living in both "just a skeleton, without a shape or name" (11).

In Pinjar, Amrita Pritam discusses the mistreatment of women during the partition and the determination of women like Puro to confront life bravely. The protagonist Puro embodies the brave spirit of a woman who perseveres in the face of hardship while leading a skeleton existence. In the book, almost all of the female characters are reduced to the condition of skeletons who have fallen prey to various forms of brutality. Due to the patriarchy's twin shackles and displacement, they are excluded.

Conclusion

Disputes over women's bodies and responsibilities between families, communities, and countries are all too frequently handled violently and carelessly, and violence against women often takes place on their bodies. Women's fortitude and selflessness during the partition are reflected in Pinjar. Also, it discusses enmity and friendship, love and grief, loss, and women's success. The story of a woman's powerlessness and one person's struggle to survive in the face of sociopolitical and cultural upheaval can also be observed in this book. The skeletal existence that women were obliged to lead after division is reflected in the loss of their goals and suppressed desires. Amrita Pritam vividly depicts the traditional status of women as "others," whether it is via the characters Puro or Hamida, Lajo, Taro, Kammo, angry Pagali, or an anonymous nude lady.

The "other" was marginalized and displaced at the price of self because their lives were unimportant, their voices were muffled, their personalities were subordinated, and they were on the periphery of the power struggle and balance of power. Several women continue to experience violent crimes within and outside of marriage, even after years of freedom. The situation is rapidly resolved and is considered normal. The socioeconomic dependency of women on males is likely the leading cause of the deplorable state of women in many houses during the division and even now.

The misfortune of women in India is also primarily due to tradition and religion, and male violence might sometimes wind up being glorified as a result. More often than not, women are created as playthings and pure objects whose value is determined by physical attractiveness, unimportant emotions, and wants. As a result, Pinjar attempts to give voice to this "other" and spread awareness of displacement, marginalization, dual identity, and helplessness in a patriarchal, male-oriented society. The book's relevance is still felt today because little has changed about women's status as perpetual "others" in Post-Partition India. Gendered violence still takes place on their bodies.

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