



PINJAR BY AMRITA PRITAM: A CRITIQUE OF PARTITION, MIGRATION, WOMEN VIOLATION AND INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

DR. TOTAWAD NAGNATH RAMRAO

Asst. Prof., Dept. of English,
Vivekanand Arts, S.D. Commerce
& Science College, Samarthnagar, Aurangabad.
(MS) INDIA

ABSTRACT

Pinjar is one of the best novels written by Amrita Pritam. The novel Pinjar is based on the theme of partition of 1947; Amrita Pritam has closely observed the dark and violent atmosphere of partition in her college days in Lahore University. The novel Pinjar means a Skelton in Punjabi is the best description and picture of the torments, struggles, violence, murders, and rapes and so on. The division of India into two states India and Pakistan was a dark time in the world's history. The novel and film Pinjar (of the same title) discusses and shows the loss of people at both sides. It is about the loss of humanity and the ultimate surrender to the fate.

INTRODUCTION

Pinjar / Skelton (1950) novel by Amrita Pritam is about the partition of India. The novel highlights the gallery of characters belong to Hindu, Muslim and Sikh religion. The novel centers on a Hindu girl, the woman protagonist, Puro. It is a tale of her abduction, migration, marriage, loss of dreams and experience. On the other hand, the novelist highlights the Muslim protagonist Rashid, a lover of Puro abducts her and forcibly married with her. The partition time is the dark episode in the people's life in general and women in particular. Puro, a Hindu girl betrothed with a neighbouring village Hindu boy, Ramchand. Puro, the girl, haunted to see Ramchand, the husband. But unfortunately she became the victim of partition and kidnapped by Rashid. Rashid, a Muslim by religion who secretly loves Puro one day finds opportunity, abducts her and marries. Partition time was such time in which the Muslim and Hindu people fought with each other.

DR. TOTAWAD NAGNATH RAMRAO

1P a g e



During Partition the people, though they may be Hindu, Sikh and Muslim feel pride in taking revenge against the opposite religious women. It was such a worst time in which only women suffered a lot. During these days if somehow they manage to run away and back to their families; family members have not accepted them. Some thinks that once the girl violated (Kidnapped) then who will marry with her. Puro somehow manages to run away from Rashid but her family members won't accept her. The people also think that if they allow her or accept, the Muslims will kill all the family members. Puro got no support at home, instead parents has closed the door.Finally Puro has no option except Rashid, the abductor, she returns to Rashid. Meanwhile Lajjo, Ramchand's sister and wife of Trilok, Puro's brother kidnapped by Muslims. Puro somehow manages to free Lajjo from the Muslims with the help of Rashid, her husband.

The partition of India highly concentrates on the lives of women and their struggle, anger, loss and so on. It is the partition in which women are suffered at all levels. It also centers on the patience and sacrifice of women. It is also about hatred and affection, love and sorrow, loss and gain of women. Puro, the representative of all rural women of the time and her helplessness and pity on her fate is nothing but the 'Skelton', no thought and no movement.

Pinjar received Filmfare Best Art Direction Award as a Partition movie lead by the well-known stars / actors like Urmila Martondkar as Puro / Hamida, Manoj Bajpayee as Rashid, Sanjay Suri as Ramchand, Sandali Sinha as Lajo, Priyanshu Chatterjee as Trilok, Kulbhushan Kharbanda as Mohanlal and so on. The characters cum actors in the film *Pinjar* seems very straight and out of life. It focuses on the issue like Hindu-Muslim division, the revenge, the helplessness, the bond between the parents and children and pre and post independence scenario. The filmmaker Chandraprakash Dwivedi has successfully adapted a novel into a big screen is really an ideal example of Bollywood achievement. The film highlights the history in the right perspective and the sensitive issue like partition and communal hatred between Muslims and Sikhs skillfully handled with rich lyrical value. The long length film, *Pinjar* is a film worth watching.

The novel centers on the Gujrat district and the surrounding villages like Chhatoani & Rattoval. The novel *Pinjar* covers a span of decade from 1935 to 1947. The novel centers on the life of a Hindu money lenders of the village - Chhatoani. The routine of the people was sound and a young girl of the family named Puro was engaged to Ramchand. Ramchand was a son of a Hindu Money lender of a neighbouring village Rattoval. Puro and Ramchand newly engaged dreams of their future life. Puro desires to see Ramchand and tries her best to meet him by standing on the road which goes to Rattoval. At the same time country is divided and both the villages of Puro and Ramchand's fall in Pakistan territory. The novelist focuses on the situation before and after partition. The novelist bitterly satirizes the political leaders and their decision of separation of Hindu and Muslim. The very decision transformed into



communal riot and the nation lost the very principles on which it stands. Though the villages full with Muslim population, but before partition the villages dominated by Hindu money lenders. The situations reversed during partition and Muslims dominated the villages. The innocent girl like Puro kidnapped and forced to marry with Muslim. The girl/women once kidnapped means she was polluted, if she wished to come back, she can't.

Lajjo is the girl who has also experienced the same like Puro. Each opposite community abducts the women. Sometimes the people loots and kidnaps the group and women are in their journey to refugee camps. Women have no safety during partition and men were helpless. As a result these communities feel proud to violate opposite community women.

The novel also highlights the extreme violation of women. The people before partition were happy among each other, living unanimously and in humanity. The partition changed the minds of the people and in the fortnight became the enemies of each other. The people of both Hindu and Sikh at one side and Muslim on the other during these days the people abducts the women and force them to walk / parade naked throughout the villages.

The novel highlights the large scale of women molestation during partition. During these days women were not safe at any places, even in refugee camps also. The refugee camps were called the safe places for women and it is said that they were fully protected by military guards. But the reality was different, the novelists narrates the situations at the refugee camps as follow;

There was a refugee camp in the adjoining village set up for the Hindus and Sikhs. The camp was guarded by the military. But daily the Muslim hooligans would come and take away young girls from the camp at night and bring them back next morning.

Thus, women became the worst sufferers during partition. The abducted women subjected to mass rape and sometimes they paraded naked and finally the so called refugee camps were also not safe for them. Lajo also experienced the same and finally Puro succeeds to free her. Lajo finally joins the family. On the other hand Puro prefers to stay in Pakistan with Rashid. Puro caught in marriage bond and love of Rashid towards her doesn't permit her to go to India. The novel *Pinjar* is about the fate of women and social abuse. The partition is not the only incident responsible for the pain and suffering of women but there are so many issues since the beginning. The audio-video of the film *Pinjar* highlights the darkest incident in the history in which only women suffered.

The partition of India and the communal riot between Hindu and Muslim gave birth to their past memories. Puro or Lajo's abduction by Rashida is out of family fend beside communal



hatered between Hindu and Muslim. The partition highlights the earlier feud between Hindus and Muslims. The Shaikhs and Sahukars of the village Chhatoani were not on good terms. It has a story, once the so called Sahukar to whom the family of Puro belongs, has attacked on the Shaikh family for a small reason. The same attack resulted into destroy the honour of Shaikhs, the sister of Rashida's father was abducted and kept at Puro's house for three nights. The partition was the proper time to take the revenge and Rashida abducts Puro, as woman for woman. The woman, though she may be Hindu or Muslim, men use them as an entity of honor killing or a way of taking justice. Puro couldn't understand the situation or the reason behind her abduction. On the situation Rashida clears his intention behind the abduction as follow:

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... If the Hindus want to keep their heads on their shoulders, they had better stay quiet.

Rashid got the proper opportunity to clear the old dispute. Puro became the victim of it. Rashida couldn't forget that they both belong to different religions and enemies of each other. The Muslims domination or upper hand in the village is the other reason behind the Puro's abduction. So the Hindus in general and Puro's parents in particular don't dare to take her back. Puro has to marry with Rashida but she cannot easily accustom to the Muslim ways of life. The novelist narrates the pathetic condition of Puro and her double identity.

In her dream, when she met her old friends and played in her parents' home, everyone still called her pooro. At other times she was Hamida. It was a double life: Hamida by day, Pooro by night. In reality she was just a Skeleton, without a shape or a name.

Puro, thus caught in trouble and not happy with Rashida. Though she is with Rashid physically but heartily she thinks of Ramchand. Puro still hopes of her better life and Ramchand will come and take her away. Being a woman and an object, she experienced a lifeless and senseless life like a Skeleton. In the course of time Puro gives birth to a child (son) and Rashida and feel family became joyful and feel triumphant. On the other hand Puro failed or loosed everything.

The partition was thus, the worst experience for all, though he / she may Hindu, Muslim or Sikh. Beside women exploitation, there was a great loss of the properties (farms, houses and businesses). Puro one night sees a horrible dream of loss, violence and burning of the villages. A dream came true and the very next day tremendous communal flare up in the village. Trilok, Hamida's brother burns the Rashida's Crop. And the inhuman atrocities began throughout the Sub-continent. The houses and properties of Hindus and Sikhs put on fire and destroyed.



The novelist, Amrita Pritam juxtaposes the two natures at one side Puro and on the other Rashida. Rashida changed his nature in the course of time beyond imagination and became a very kind and considerable man. The very nature of Rashid compels Puro to compromise with him and accept him as a partner. On the part of Rashid it is the triumph of human kindness and goodness that makes him to adjust with Puro and help the other victims like Lajjo.

The novel and film *Pinjar / Skeleton* is thus an excellent novel and film written by Amrita Pritam and filmed by Dr. Chandraprakash respectively. It is a story of women exploitation and their fate. During partition women became the object and women like Puro, Kamoo, Taro and so on have to experience the chaotic situation. The women and their overall world - love, emotions and feelings like mere Skeleton, without flesh and blood. Thus, Puro became the representative of all suffering women.

Pinjar / The Skeleton is a saga of helplessness of women and the struggle for survival of the individual amidst the socio-political and cultural forces. It is also about a tragic tale of conflicting loyalties. *Pinjar* means a skeleton lexically and horrifying appearance or nothingness (no life - no flesh) metaphorically. The loss of dream will and desire means death and death means the Skeleton. It is such type of loss not only destroys one's identity but also security and a purpose of living. A Skeleton means a sense of absurdity in existence, and a frame of bones without flesh and blood.

The novelist Amrita Pritam has portrayed the character of Puro as a masiah or an incarnation. Though Puro has gone through various pains and sufferings but stands as a support or light for other girls like Lajjo. At the very beginning she changes the mind of Rashid and he stands beside her to help the needy, suppressed and oppressed. She helps such grief - stricken girls of the village exploited by both Hindu and Muslim families. By her service and sacrifice, Puro wins the heart of everyone. She forgets herself / her identity that she is a Puro or Hamida and her own life like a Skeleton. As a social reformer Puro socializes both the communities as easily as possible. Puro burns in rage when she hears the abduction of girls. Puro knows that such girls will be thrown out or forced into unwanted marriages and enslaved for the whole life like her. In her socializing activity she succeeds in locating Lajjo and rescues her from the abductor. Puro gets the first and last opportunity to return to India. Puro rejects the offer and accepts the fate.

The novel *Skeleton* is no doubt an excellent novel highly explores novelists capacity of communicating lot of things in a very short / few words. Amrita Pritam has highlighted the deep human psyche during partition. Puro, the central character symbolizes that even a Skeleton has to live in the face of adversities. The title *Skeleton* is highly symbolic in nature.



It symbolizes the unique philosophy of life that man is responsible for his own actions and to choose his destiny.

Thus, the novel *Skeleton* is a saga of women's sacrifice, courage and suffering. Historical in nature, the novel highly focuses on the lives of the innocent and their journey towards experience. Fully philosophical in nature, the novel, *Skeleton* very well narrates the truth of life, the Karma and destiny. Puro is really an ideal character puts behind a lot of impression of goodness and knowledge. Puro's overall action proves a strong answer to the questions of religion and to the gender - biased society. The novelist thus struggles for the emancipation of women and identity.

REFERENCE

1. Pritam, Amrita. *Skeleton*. Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1970.
2. Sidhwa, Bapsi. *Cracking India*. London; Heinemann, 1991.
3. Shauna Singh, Baldwin. *English Lessons and Other Stories*, 1999.
4. Hasan, Mushirul. *Legacy of a Divided Nation; India's Muslims since Independence*. New Delhi: Oxford, 1997.
5. Datta, V.N. "Interpreting the Partition", *The Tribune*, 1977.