

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

Subversion of Patriarchal Violence in Pritam's *The Skeleton* and Baldwin's  
"Family Ties"

**A thesis submitted to  
The faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of  
Master of Arts in English**

**By  
Bimala Paudyal**

**Central Department of English  
Kirtipur, Kathmandu  
February 2008**

**Tribhuvan University**  
**Faculty of Humanities and Social Science**

The thesis entitled **Subversion of Patriarchal Violence in Pritam's *The Skeleton and Baldwin's "Family Ties"*** submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Bimala Paudyal has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Research committee Members:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Internal Examiner  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 External Examiner  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Head

Central Department of English  
 Tribhuvan University  
 Kirtipur, Kathmandu

Date:

### **Acknowledgements**

I owe a deep sense of gratitude to Mr. Devi Prasad Gautam, Lecture, Central department of English, Tribhuwan University. The completion of this thesis could never have come into its present form without his scholarly guidance and suggestions. It is with the sincere blessing of him that I could start the work and I have been enjoying his benevolent patronage and help throughout its course in many ways. I would extend my profound gratitude to Dr. Krishna Chandra Sharma, Head of the central Department Of English, T.U. for granting me an opportunity to carry out this research.

My sincere sense of obligation also goes to my respected teachers, Dr. Beerendra Pandey, Mr. Bishnu Sapkota, and Mr. Tika Lamsal for providing the invaluable suggestions and for their great help during the writing class course.

I would like to thank my friends and well wishers at Tribhuwan University for their unflagging support in the course of preparing this thesis.

I am also thankful to my family members for their kind cooperation and encouragement in carrying out this research work.

I would like to thank University Computer Center, Kritipur

**Bimala Paudyal**

## Abstract

This dissertation concentrates on Amrita Pritam's *The Skeleton* and Shauna Singh Baldwin's "Family Ties". Written on the backdrop of the partition violence of India in 1947, these texts explore the plight of women victims during and at the aftermath of partition. The main objective of this study is to analyze the writer's humanistic intervention in *The Skeleton* and the political use of irony in "Family Ties" while dealing with issues of partition violence. The concept of humanism and the politics of irony has been used in the texts respectively in *The Skeleton* and "Family Ties" to excavate and undercut the bourgeois and patriarchal natures of violence that remains largely in Indian historiography.

## Contents

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Acknowledgements   | ii    |
| Abstracts  | iii   |
| Pritam and <i>The Skeleton</i>   | 1-8   |
| Baldwin and "Family Ties"  | 9-11  |
| The Politics of Irony  | 12-19 |
| Human Dimension in Partition Literature  | 20-26 |
| Humanistic Intervention in Partition Violence: A Critical Study of <i>The Skeleton</i> | 27-38 |
| Subverting Patriarchal Violence through Politics of Irony in "Family Ties"             | 39-46 |
| Conclusion   | 47-48 |
| Works Cited  | 49-50 |

### **Pritam and *The Skeleton***

This thesis focuses on Amrita Pritam's *The Skeleton* and Shauna Singh Baldwin's "Family Ties" which depict the partition violence perpetrated on the body of women. By creating irony upon the cruelty of patriarchal violence, both the texts help subvert the patriarchal nature of violence meted out during and aftermaths of the partition of India. During the partition, lakhs of families were under pain, trauma, suffering, displacement, loss, abduction, rape etc. wherein the worst hits were the women. Thousands of helpless women were raped and kidnapped as communal and political tension let loose in the Indo-Pak border villages. The violence upon women through different forms of suffering such as rape, abduction, intolerance, cruelty and kidnapping rendered thousands of innocent lives as destitutes. Yet, love and humanism blossomed. Despite widespread riots, there were people who still had faith in humanism, who struggled to survive and were waiting for their dreams to come true.

*The Skeleton*, though it has the background of the partition, differs from other partition novels. It is about harmony and love overpowering hate and violence. Amrita Pritam, a feminist writer writes *The Skeleton* on the background of the partition tragedy which depicts the complexities of human mind above all the predicament of the abducted women. However, Pritam applies the tool of humanism in her text to undermine the inhuman atrocities done by the males in patriarchal convention during partition.

In 1947 at the time of partition she moved to New Delhi from her birth place, Gujranwala in Pakistan. There she began to write in Hindi as opposed to

Punjabi, her mother tongue. She worked until 1961 for all India Radio. She was divorced in 1960 and since then her work has become more explicitly feminist, drawing on her unhappy marriage in many of her stories and poems. The shimmering effect of the world war second and the Partition of India became the fertile ground for her literary career. A number of works have been translated into English, including her autobiographical works *Black Rose* and *Revenue Stamps*. *Shadows of Words* is another autobiography, which captures her entire lifespan. In this autobiography she expresses her innate belief that since childhood all the experiences of life have been created and lived under some shadow or another. Death casts its shadows right at the time of her birth. As we go on experiencing many things in life we slowly feel the shadows of weapons, words, dreams, shadows of authoritarian power and shadows of contemplation. In this book she presents an insight into her new inner world. Viewed from various angles, it happens to be a distinctly adventurous autobiography, which like a serialised photographic form keeps enhancing those images.

Pritam was born in the western part of Punjab, presently in Pakistan, in 1919 to a Sikh family. She started writing from very early age i.e. 16. Her first writing is a collection of poems, which was published in 1935. Her writing reflected the tragic impact of the Partition-violence of Indian women and their neglect and suppression in Indian society. Most of her novels are imprinted with the gloomy and decadent anxiety of that haunted period. Perhaps no other state in India felt the sorrows and vicissitudes of partition than Punjab. It was a great bloodbath, on the both sides, and the biggest migration the world has ever known hitherto. Partition riots have left indelible marks on the body and soul of an entire

generation, but very few victims have kept written records or diaries, perhaps personal experiences were too harrowing to document. Though her early writings are romantic, she is gradually matured into revolutionary writer. *The Skeleton* however differs from other works and it is based on humanity as well as harmony among the people in all three religions.

The period of The Partition of India has become a history of violence. People from all communities-- Hindus, Sikh and Muslim--suffered through different forms of violence: abduction, rape, loss, displacement, pain, trauma, death and so on. In the violence women were the center of attack in all three communities. They were either raped and abducted or widowed. Partition in one sense, is male's agenda but victims are the women. They were the true sufferers of the horrific violence that goes beyond the experience of male. Most of the women committed suicide instead of being impure, and remaining as a black spot in the society. In this context Bharati Ray says:

The fear of rape or abduction or falling into the enemies hands Had driven hundreds of women to take their own lives--to Jump into wells, take or carry poison in case it was needed, beg their male kinship to help them die rather than face dishonor, or commit suicide after zthemselves into a well in order to preserve, as Urvashi Butalia says, the sanctity "and "purity" of their religion and to avoid conversion (Gender Catastrophe, 37). The Indian State, instead of looking at abduction, rape, suicide and murder through the lense of violence has bestowed the act with the glory of martyrdom. Butalia finds irony in assigning the halo of martyrdom to those women who had committed mass suicide. In the name of

martyrdom, women are enslaved in the state. Women's death, thus was glorified as "Martyrdom" and it was taken as "supreme sacrifice" for saving their purity and honour (186). In partition violence, a woman was considered as her husband's property which could be snatched or violated at any cost. This kind of large violation of women, with rape used as instrument of revenge upon men, has been widely experienced in situations of communal violence. The traumatic violence meted out to the numberless women at the time of partition demolished all sense of self, existential or social, granted to them by the constructive patriarchal consensus. They were dead-like psychologically even if alive physically. For their own honour and the community's dignity, men forced their women to die by providing them with weapons, strangling them, drowning them or burning them. Women themselves gave their consent to such brutal acts. However, it is women who emerged with a greater existential autonomy after surviving the riots. They not only accorded space to themselves for growth, but they also created in themselves the enterprise for independent living.

Written in 1950 in Punjabi, Pritam's *The Skeleton* is one of the famous and important novels about partition violence which later was translated into English by Khushwant Singh in 1984. In the text, Pritam tries to create peace and harmony through the humanistic behaviour of her main characters Hamida and Rashida. Her writing ironises and undermines the patriarchal consensus by exposing the cruelty, harassment and violence perpetrated upon women in the name of the community. Amrita Pritam like other feminist historiographers Ritu Menon, Kamala Bhasin, Urvashi Butalia exposes the patriarchal biases prevailing in the discourse of partition. Ritu Menon and Kamala Bhasin in their research on partition find gender

biases in the official history of partition as far as the issue of women is concerned; "The women are present in some reports and policy documents, and no account of partition violence for instance, is complete without the numbering details of the violence against women. Yet they are invisible " (*Borders and Boundaries, 11*). Menon and Bhasin are of the opinion that historiography of partition demands the cognition of claims for personal identity which has been lost in high political and patriarchal discourses. Butalia further presents the incident that took place in 1947:

There are accounts of innumerable rapes, of women being stripped naked and Paraded streets of their breasts being cut off their bodies being carved with the Religious symbols of the other community [...] Several had to spend their lives in others homes as permanent refugees. Many of these women are alive today, their stories still untold. (37)

Butalia exposes the cruelty of males upon females by researching many events. The survivor of the partition tragedy uncovers the truth how women became the victims during these days. Butalia once remarks: " Sometimes the women themselves resisted out of fear of a second dislocation, repeat of the trauma, another uprooting, or non-acceptance or, because many of them were actually happy and settled in their new situations" ("community" 48). Butalia talks of the recovery operation of India after partition. From the women's perspective, the recovery operation was the double dislocation, first when they were abducted, in course of time managed themselves in the new environment and after that again they were ordered to return to the earlier place because the majority of abducted

Hindu women harboured the fear that they may not be received again into the fold of their society. Ironically, the women officials understood very well the fear and dilemma faced by those they were recovering, and over a period of time began to question the nature and necessity of the enterprise.

Pritam identifies her protagonist, in the text, as an undaunted female and a humanist who always struggles for the betterment of human life. Pritam's heroine Hamida is full of humanistic feeling that enables her to maintain peace and harmony throughout the text. In the novel, Pritam presents the greatness and humanistic behaviour of her main characters. This applies especially to Hamida, who despite living in poor condition, too helps other women assuming that she is in a better position in comparison to them. Hamida wants "to forget that Rashida had abducted and wronged her. She fervently longed to make love to him. After all, he was her husband and the father of her son. This alone was true; this alone mattered" (29). The official history of Indian state largely excluded women's vulnerability during partition. The writer is very sensitive to the agony and pain of women who faced rape, abduction, deprivation of love and care. She ruthlessly exposed man's false sense of superiority of gender when she says that no men have ever pealed a woman completely. A woman is a mirror, a reflection of the divine the cosmic, which man defiles with his ugly and beastly designs. A woman is a goddess who needs to be worshiped adorned, pampered, and caressed very gently and fondly. She is an eternal source of joy, love, and inspiration and a symbol of feminine grace but man always exploits her for his own selfish ends. Pritam, dissatisfied with such official history of partition of India 1947, has tried to write a new history of partition concerning women's suffering and sacrifice by giving

space to the silenced stories of pain and trauma that many women underwent during partition violence.

Pritam exposes the traumatic condition of women by uncovering their bitter experiences during those partition days. The experience of those women ironises the notion of patriarchy. Thousands of women were abducted, raped either murdered or forced into committing suicide. Patriarchy demonstrated its ugliest face and women became helpless victims of male barbarity and the notion of honour. Pritam unveils the animalistic nature of males that haunts the females much. And, through the means of *The Skeleton*, Pritam uses humanism in case of the protagonist, Hamida who always runs after the hapless women for their upliftment. It is visible in the text that Hamida helps almost all the female characters presented in the novella. It would be a great mistake to trivialize her role as a mere simple action in the text. Pritam's humanistic imagination equips Hamida with humanity that leaves a positive lesson to those who are guided by violent task during and aftermath of partition.

Some of her important poems are "Amrit Lehan", "Jinda Jan", "Sunehray", "Dedh Ghante Kee Mulakat", "Do Khirkiyaan", "Saat Saval Terwan Sooraj", "Uninjan Din" etc. She has published twenty-eight novels, eighteen volumes of verse, five of short stories and sixteen of miscellaneous prose. She was the first woman poet to be awarded the Sahitya Academic Prize in 1956 for her volume of poems entitled *Sunehre* (Messages). She was awarded the Padma Shri in 1969, an Honorary D Litt by Delhi University in 1973, and the Vapt Sarov

Award (International) from Bulgaria in 1980. Her volume of poems entitled *Kagaz Te Canvas* won the Bharatiya Jnanpith award for 1981.

## **Baldwin and "Family Ties"**

Baldwin's "Family Ties" portrays the biasness of patriarchy towards the females in the family during and in the aftermath of partition. "Family Ties" is a short fiction written in 1961 when it was the time of partition of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Baldwin presents the partition generation character, Chandini Kaur and the new generation girl, the narrator herself. Though it is a short fiction, it covers the period from 1947 to 1961. As we hear, there appear both conservative and subversive political irony in any ironic text this text uses the subversive political irony to destabilize the bourgeois patriarchal nature of the society. As Beerendra Pandey says,

Radical group, which includes the writers such as Shauna Singh Baldwin and Rajinder Singh Bedi, exploits subversive political irony that does not only interrogates but also destabilizes the bourgeois patriarchal nature of the Indian society by placing the 'silenced subaltern subjectivity' at the center of their narratives. ("Paradigm", 106)

The silenced subaltern teenage female character, in "Family Ties", views the patriarchal notion of the family tie with her critical perspective that helps subvert the deeply rooted patriarchy. Baldwin presents her protagonist, the narrator girl herself conscious of every issue in the family as well as in the society.

Shauna Singh Baldwin was born in 1962 in Montreal, Quebec. She is a Canadian American novelist of Indian descent. She is the recipient of many

awards for her different literary works. Her novel, *What the Body Remembers* won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best Book. Similarly, her another novel *The Tiger Claw* was nominated for the Giller Prize. She currently lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Her second short story collection, *We are not in Pakistan*, was due to be released in Canada in 2007. Shauna's awards include Indian's international Neharu Award (gold medal) for public speaking, and the national Shastri Award, a silver medal for English prose. She is the recipient of the 1995 Writer's Union of Canada Award for short prose and the 1997 Canadian Literary Award. *English Lessons* received the 1996 Friends of American Writers Award.

Baldwin touchingly ironises the familial violence upon women guided by patriarchy. For instance, in "Family Ties" she places the silenced subaltern subjectivity of a ten/ eleven year female child in a manner that helps challenge the patriarchy offering a critical distance of resistance to the marginalized women (B.Pandey, "Paradigm" 108). Moreover, patriarchy demonstrated its ugliest face and women became helpless victims of male barbarity and the notion of honour. Thousands of women died or became homeless, and many more had their lives laid waste. Their silenced history has been brought into focus by the partition narrative of women writers. Baldwin, in doing so, focuses the role of silenced subaltern kind of female character at the center of the story. We come to know the plight of partition victimized women like Chandini Kaur through the conscious nature of the narrator girl, otherwise the male characters are trying to veil the whole issue of Chandini. By making her main character conscious Baldwin has tried to subvert the patriarchal notion that looks upon women as mere objects.

Even if the partition created numerous problems to different groups due to different constraints, the violence upon women becomes more important to me. Hence, I have specified and limited my research work only to the stories of partition violence perpetrated upon women. To conduct this research I have used humanistic approach and politics of irony to interpret and subvert the patriarchal violence upon women during partition and in the aftermath. Amrita Pritam's humanistic intervention in the text has been able to undermine the violence from both sides; Muslims and Hindus. And Shauna Singh Baldwin's politics of irony helps undercut the patriarchal violence in the family as well as in the society. Pritam's *The Skeleton* covers the period of partition, while Baldwin's "Family Ties" represents the partition period and aftermath of partition. My interpretation of humanistic intervention and politics of irony in partition literature like *The Skeleton* and "Family Ties" follows from the research works of Ritu Menon, Kamala Bhasin, Urvashi Butalia and the concept of Ian Talbot, Gilmartin, Linda Hutcheon, Beerendra Pandey etc. This study is divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals with the general introduction itself. The second chapter deals with the methodology which contains the topics "The Politics of Irony" and "Human Dimension in Partition Literature" The third chapter is about the textual analysis which deals with humanistic intervention in *The Skeleton* and politics of irony in "Family Ties". The final chapter is the conclusion of the thesis.

## The politics of Irony

Irony, in literature is a statement of action whose apparent meaning is underlain by a contrary meaning. If a speaker's style departs notably from whatever the reader considers the normal way of saying a thing or the way normal for this speaker, the reader may suspect irony. Irony happens in all kinds of discourses (verbal, visual, oral) in common speech as well as in highly crafted aesthetic form, in the so-called high art as well as in popular culture. As Linda Hutcheon says, "someone attributes irony; someone makes irony happen" (*Irony's Edge*, 6). As a discursive strategy, irony is supposed to be concerned with discursive analysis - the politics of representation in the practice of cultural studies. Discursive analysis intertwines irony with wider historical and socio-cultural contexts which make its politics inevitable. It is because the discursive presence is not only a matter of extended message encoded in the text but also because it is produced by interpreters in a dynamic interplay of the said meaning with the unsaid one. So we can say that irony happens in discursive communities. Every interpreter has his or her own discursive communities. It is necessary both for the articulation of irony and for its affiliative or exclusive valences. Its discursive presence that comes in interpretation either from the ironist's intention or from the space between the said and the unsaid. The interpretation comes from discursive presence carries an edge and the politics of irony becomes unequivocally apparent.

Irony happens as a part of communicative process; it is not a static rhetorical tool to be deployed, but itself comes into being in the relation between meanings. Irony happens but also between people and utterances and, sometimes between intention and interpretation. Irony can function tactically in the service of a wide range of political positions, "legitimizing" or undercutting a wide variety of interests (Hutcheon 10). Hutcheon calls irony "a risky business" where there is no

guarantee that the interpreter will "get" the irony in the same way as it was intended (11). After all the touchy political issues that arise around irony's usage and interpretation invariably focus on the issues of either ironist's or interpreter's intention.

Discursive communities make irony possible. The notion of discursive community acknowledges "those strangely enclosing constraints of discursive contexts and foregrounds the particularities" not only of space and time but "of class, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual choice –not to mention nationality, religion, age, profession and all other micro political groupings," in which we place ourselves or are placed by our society (92). The overlapping of discursive communities is the condition that makes politics of irony possible. The politics of irony, as Pratt states, does not create "amiable communities" rather itself comes into being in "contact zones" as the social spaces where cultures meet, clash, grapple with each other often in context of highly asymmetrical relation of power" (qtd. in Hutcheon 93). In ironic discourse,

The whole communicative process is not only "altered and distorted" but also made possible by those different worlds to which each of us differently belongs and which form the basis of the expectations, assumptions, and preconception that we bring to the complex processing of discourse, of language in use [...] It is also however, a culturally shaped process. No theorist of irony would dispute the existence of a special relationship in ironic discourse between the

ironist and the interpreter, but for most, it is irony itself that is said to create that relationship. (89)

Irony is a culturally shaped process that involves social practice, of interaction between participants in particular situations. A single community possesses various matters which exist in diversity and that, in fact, enables the irony to happen. There is an importance of community in terms of language we perceive within a structure of norms. That structure, as Fish says, not "abstract and independent, but social" (qtd.in Hutcheon 90).

Irony rarely involves a simple decoding of a single inverted message. More often, it is a semantically complex process of relating differentiating, and combining said and unsaid meanings - and doing so with some evaluative edge.. One carries one thing but conveys something else in irony. For every ironist and every initiate who understands irony, the argument goes, as Gaunt and Rose say a "non-initiated victim" must be imagined who would be outside the elitist community created by irony (qtd. in Hutcheon 94). In certain contexts, there is such a thing as irony where a spoken meaning is played off against implied but unspoken meanings- - with some evaluative edge; that this irony where a spoken meaning is played off against implies but unspoken meanings-with some evaluative edge; that this irony can be deliberate, but need not be; that there will likely be some sort of culturally agreed upon markers in the utterance and the enunciative context to signal both that irony is in play and how it is to be interpreted. There is positive valuing of irony in certain discursive communities; in others, there is not. Obviously ironists and interpreters of irony can meet on any

number of different terrains; rhetorical, linguistic, aesthetic, social, ethical, cultural, ideological, professional and so on .So, the success of irony depends upon a lack of disparity or, perhaps more accurately, some degree of coincidence between interpreters and ironists senses of "the rules determining when and where and by what means and in what form, tone and code who may say what to whom"(Hutcheon 99). It has been argued that irony, in Chamberlain's word, is a "matter of unspoken understandings" and "ideological complicity-- an argument based on shared understandings of how the world is"- which can obviously cut across professional lines (qtd in Hutcheon 100 ).

Irony explicitly sets up a relationship between ironist and audience that is political in nature as irony invokes notions of hierarchy and subordination, judgment and perhaps even moral superiority. So, the political meaning of irony is not only substitution of the identity and position of both the ironist and the audience but is a matter of interpretation as much as of its use that as Hutcheon argues, happens "in the space between the said and unsaid; it needs both to happen" (12). It is always crucial to interpreting irony's meaning and politics. Irony has its transideological political functions since it is a relational discursive strategy. The transideological nature of its "politics means that irony can be used either to undercut or to reinforce both conservative and radical position "(27). It has "politically transformative power in which the marginalized can be heard by the center, and yet keeps its critical distance and thus unbalance and undermine "(27). As Hutcheon argues,

Irony happens in the space between the said and unsaid; it needs both to happen. What I want to call the ironic meaning is inclusive and relational, the said and the unsaid coexist for the interpreter and each has meaning in relation to the other because they literally interact to create the real ironic meaning. The ironic meaning is not, then simply the unsaid meaning, and the unsaid is not always a simple inversion or opposite of the said: it is always different other than and more than the said. (12-13)

In this light, the political meaning of irony is not only substitution of the identity and position of both the ironist and the audience. But it is a matter of interpretations much as of its use, that, as mentioned in above passage, happens in the space between the said and unsaid. Irony needs both to happen. Thus, the context for the construction of irony is always crucial to interpreting its meaning and politics.

After all the touchy political issues that arise around irony's usage and interpretation invariably focus on the issues of intention of either ironist or interpreter. And it is because of its very foregrounding of the politics of human agency in this way that irony has become an "important strategy of oppositional rhetoric"(12). Its discursiveness comes from the interpreter and the ironist as the agenda who perform the act of attributing both meanings and motives, and do so in particular situations and context for a particular means. Such an attributing irony involves both semantic and evaluative inferences. Similarly, "the semantic dimension of irony " is influenced by the receiver and by "the surrounding tension

–filled environment" (Hutcheon 12). African American theorists brought Du Bois's early idea of "black double consciousness" and Bakhtin's notions of "double-voiced discourse". They have indirectly theorized irony in their discussions of "Signifying" (31). This idea of an irony that functions to repeat and yet to revise the white discourses in which North American blacks perform operate allows, in Cooke's words, "negotiation along two axes of power, the social and mental, the public and the covert"(qtd. in Hutcheon 31). The marginalized can be "heard by the center and yet keep its critical distance and thus unbalance and undermine"(31).The concept of irony's political functioning in socio-cultural contexts comes from Mikhail Bakhtin's "notion of the double –voiced discourse " that is the forms for transmitting speech can not be treated in isolation (31). It is irony in use, in discourse, that gets precedence over irony as a textual strategy.

Irony is a political issue that involves relations of power based in relations of communication with issues such as exclusion and inclusion, intervention and evasion, thereby making the functioning of the specific function of ironic meaning is conditioned by many factors such as our nationality, male or female, working class or not. Irony can obviously be "both political and apolitical, both conservative and radical , both repressive and democratizing "(Hutcheon 35). Because of its edge, all discursive strategies can be described in the same exact terms , but more does seem to be at stake with irony .The "community enhancing function " of irony is very important .We can recall those seductive ironies attributed to rock stars like Maddona and note their "aggregative" effect on the fans (55-56). Irony's edge, then, in Hutcheon's words, would seem to "ingratiate

and to intimidate, to underline and to undermine, it brings people together and drives them apart"(56). As Hutcheon argues:

This pragmatic decision does not at all mean that we should forget the complexities of irony's inferred motivation, though: an awareness of the range of operations that irony can be interpreted as carrying out may help resist the temptation to generalize about either the effects to which irony is capable or the effect of which it can most certainly give rise retaining this complexity is important because edge is the primary distinguishing feature of irony as a rhetorical and structural strategy, no matter how protean its actual manifestation. (56)

The function of irony is not single in itself. Still we seem to want to call the thing itself by a single name:irony. The community enhancing function of irony is very important. To know its importance, we need "only recall those seductive ironies attributed to rock" (55). However, edge is the primary distinguishing feature of irony, both as a rhetorical and structural strategy.

The ironic meaning in practice in a social or communicable context is something that "happens" rather than something that simply exists. So, it happens in discourse, in usage in the dynamic space of the interaction of text, context and interpreter and, sometimes "intending ironist"(58). Linda Hutcheon argues that ironic meaning possesses three major semantic characteristics: relational, inclusive and differential. Politics of irony is relational strategy in the sense that it operates not only between meanings (said, unsaid) but also between people (ironists, interpreters, targets). So politics of irony involves social interaction as an inquiring

mode to avoid the single and dogmatic. As Conway and Seery state, irony becomes "political... it is performed in the service of life" (2). Irony, in this way, functions as a guide and a disciplinarian. There is much in every personal life, which like wild shoots must be pruned away, and irony is an excellent surgeon. So far irony is concerned in hit of violence, the thesis addresses its topic with reference to the partition and post-partition violence of Indian state in ensuing sections.

### **Human Dimension in Partition Literature**

The period of partition of India has become a history of violence. People from all the three communities: Hindus, Muslims and Sikh have suffered different forms of violence such as abduction, rape, displacement, dispossession, pain, trauma, death. But such things have been silenced by text book histories. Historical studies have tended to focus more on the "causes of the partition "than on its human consequences "(Talbot 1). They have also neglected a comparative approach to the study of the two regions which were most affected by it. Ian Talbot in his books seeks to avoid polemics by focusing foremost on the human dimension of partition. Human dimension of partition has not been addressed in Indian official history.

Actually, partition is the great human event but this aspect is strangely silent in the text book histories. Unlike historians, novelists have fully addressed the human agonies, which accompanied partition. Hundreds of novels, short stories and plays have taken these as their theme. Much of this outpouring has been "as cathartic as the writers relate their own experience" (Talbot 229). Novelists have also commented on the brutalizing effects of violence on its perpetrators and on its elemental ferocity. As Talbot says, "art closely mirrors reality to this print" (229). Many autobiographies and literary accounts provide a graphic account of the severe traumatic experience undergone by countless people during partition violence. Talbot's article mentions the physical and psychological impact upon the people in terms of violence, abduction, migration and resettlement.

Migration was the single most important human agony, which attended the transfer of power. It brought in its wake a sense of hopelessness and arootedness. Around "ten million people in all were found to flee from their homes "(238). Migration brought not only constant danger but the emotional trauma of displacement and broken identities. Historians have totally neglected this aspect of partition, yet it lay its "very heart and still continues to exert a profound psychological effect "(240). Migration, at the end of difficult and frequently terrifying journeys, had to re-stablish their hives in a strange environment. Refugee experiences on arrival in their new homeland varied enormously. Some had relatives to smooth their paths and were soon be able to pick-up their old occupations. In Talbot's words, "the less fortunate had to make their own way and faced both short term exploitation and months of demoralizing inactivity in refugee camps (244). The refugees, especially non-Muslim could not seek a similar religious solace for their material losses. These were frequently greater than those of theirs Muslims to counterparts as the Hindu and Sikh population of the west Punjab was far weathers than the Muslims of the east. It owned the bulk of the business and factories and urban property in the "Pakistan " areas (247).

Similarly, in north India, the agony of the partition massacres and migration is one of the rearing realities. The social and political implication of this reality have been largely neglected. Only the fictional characters in many fiction represent the emotional and physical pain of innumerable ordinary men and women. Historians have neglected the sense of loss and displacement brought by partition. In this way, all the conflicting human emotions evoked by partition have

also been neglected in history text books. National pride and religious fulfillment mingled with a sense of loss and bewilderment. Many novelists outside intruded into harmonious family and community relationships destroying that. Such emotions cut across community identity. They lie at the very heart of the human impact of partition. So it would be great mistake to omit this dimension since it is an important key to understanding social and political developments in the decades which have followed North Indian independence.

The violence, whether physical or psychological, was brutally perpetrated during and aftermaths of the partition of India in all segments of society along the lines of class, gender, culture, age or religion. This means of violence and the violent suppression takes on the character of political irony in partition literature. On the other hand, the Indian state established itself on the father patriarchy-removing women from their homes and transporting them out of their country in the name of restoring them and to assert itself as their protector. The gendered violence of the partition was essentially an outcome of patriarchal convention of taking women as the secondary citizens. The partition violence was bolstered not only by the conventionalized gender prejudice embedded within the politico-religious consciousness of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs but also by a "reference to current world trends in the economic practice of state" (G. Pandey 29). The Indian official records of the partition violence are moved around the interests of the bourgeois nationalist patriarchy. The representation of the partition violence supported by the patriarchal and bourgeois values and convention remain largely effaced under the disguise of the political religious movement for freedom.

Thousands of families were divided, homes destroyed, crops left to rot, villages abandoned. The enmity created and strengthened by the violence of partition has stayed with the people of the subcontinent and is played out whenever there are riots and violence based on religion identity.

Women were central to the history of partition in many ways yet, they find little space in the official histories of partition. Women were violated by their own families and communities and the others as well. In the name of 'martyred'. The men of Hindu and Sikh families killed women of their own community. Thus women of both communities have been deeply affected. Many widows and mothers have lost their husbands and sons. The attacks on women including sexual atrocities, rape and burning, verbal abuse etc. took place more on women from the minority community. Women were central to the history of partition in many ways. Yet, they find almost no space in the official histories of partition. But as David Gilmartin says ,

Some historians, of course, have incorporated fiction and personal histories into their works in ways that have highlighted the distinctive impact of partition on the lives of different classes and genders, such work has proved fruitful in illustrating how different groups of people have in retrospect made sense of the partition experience, and in highlighting how the new states created in 1947 attempted to forge their own national identities through efforts to deal with the aftermath of partition's violence. (1069)

However, the emotional and physical pain of innumerable ordinary men and women is represented by fictional characters in different fictions. Similarly the conflicting emotions evoked by partition and the sense of the displacement brought by migration were exposed in different artistic works. Much has been written about the partition history of India with the special interference to mass migration and recovery operation. Yet the representation of partition regarding women's experiences simply valorizes the patriarchal construction and preserves the communal dictatorship over women rather than exploring the real plight of the thousands of victimized women during partition. The partition violence does not end with the establishment of free and separate nations in the name of India and Pakistan in 1947. The more obvious violence is meted out in the representation of the partition violence in the nationalist historiography of both modern India and Pakistan .the official records of the partition violence are moved around the interests of the bourgeois nationalist patriarchy. The revisionist historiography of 1947 by women writers such as Ritu Menon , Veena Das and Urvarshi Butalia, in the words of Beerendra Pandey , "focus on the double subordination of women through abduction and recovery , rape and murder" ("Paradigm"106). He further says," the representation of the gendered violence, which remains effaced in the history textbooks of both India and Pakistan, receives a central treatment in partition fiction by women writers, especially the survivors"(106 ).

Dissatisfied with such gendered history, the female writers began to seek the true involvement of women during partition . In the process of rewriting new female historiography of partition, these writers not only disrupt the so called realist representation of women's experiences and involvement at the time of

partition but at the same time they also explore how women and their experiences are structured by the discourse of gender and nationalism.

In the coming sections of this thesis, the short fictions especially *The Skeleton* by Amrita Pritam and "Family Ties" by Shauna Sing Baldwin will be analyzed as the stories that exploit sharp irony to undercut the violence during and at the aftermath of partition. These partition stories are able to demystify the politics of partition violence by using irony. The irony exploited in the texts helps unearth the undermined women's existence.

The irony in these does not only depict the patriarchal politics inherent in religion, rehabilitation and recovery programs of the time but also subverts the patriarchal violence presenting their female characters equipped with humanity and nature of protect. Such a politics implied in the use of irony by the partition writers gives us a clear insight that the issues of equality and feminism are not solely delimited within the biological boundaries of male and female. And hence, the gender victimization is patriarchal convention to supported by bourgeois ideologies.

The irony exploited in the texts helps unearth the undermined women's existence. The irony in these doesn't only depict the patriarchal politics inherent in religion, rehabilitation and recovery programs of the time but also subverts the patriarchal violence presenting their female characters equipped with humanity and nature of protect. Such a politics implied in the use of irony by the partition writers gives us a clear insight that the issues of equality and feminism are not solely delimited within the biological boundaries of male and female. So, the

gender victimization is seen to be a patriarchal convention supported by bourgeois ideologies.

## **Humanistic Intervention in Partition Violence: A critical study of *The Skeleton***

*The Skeleton*, unlike other partition novels, is about harmony and love overpowering hate and violence. It is a famous novel by Amrita Pritam that depicts riots, mayhem, human sufferings and hope. During partition, full-scale riots broke out in which lakhs of families were displaced overnight. The worst hits were the women. Thousands of helpless women were raped and kidnapped as communal and political tensions let loose in the indo-Pak border villages. Intolerance, cruelty, kidnapping and rape of women rendered thousands of innocent lives as destitute. Yet love and humanism blossomed. While there were widespread riots, there were people who still hoped in humanism to survive and were waiting for their dreams to come true. Amrita Pritam's *The Skeleton* is a true example of such humanistic feeling. By presenting her characters equipped with humanity, Pritam undermines the violence during partition days. Moreover, Pritam is able to present her female protagonist in a manner that helps subvert the patriarchal violence upon women from all the three communities viz, Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims.

In the novel, Pritam tells a story of a woman, Pooro, who is first abducted and then married by a Muslim youth named Rashida and her final reconciliation with changed circumstances. Pooro belongs to a family of moneylenders of Chatto, a village in Punjab. She is young and beautiful and her marriage is fixed with a young and handsome youth, Ram Chanda from Rattoval, a neighboring village. But Rashida, a Muslim who has his eye on her for a long time, abducts and takes her home and marries her. Rashida abducts Pooro not only

because of their family feud but he also loves Pooro. After he abducts Pooro, he says to her," it was my love and prodding of the Shaikh clan that made me do this, but I cannot bear to see you so sad"(8). Here, we see a humane behaviour of an abductor to his wife. Pritam makes her characters humanistic in many ways. Being an abductor, Rashinda might have behaved with his wife harshly, but he always becomes sincere to his wife and loves her in the same way.

The main character, Pooro-turned-Hamida is very much equipped with humanity. Though she is very poor in her health, she is rich to love others and thus maintains harmony in the society. She helps the victims to the best of her capability providing food and clothes. Hamida often meets helpless people like Kammo. Kammo is only a twelve years old girl who has to fetch water from the well at a fragile and tender age. Hamida cannot see her misery and wants "to take the heavy pitcher" from her shoulder (22). Both of the women intend to share feelings with each other. The sharing of the feelings at a time when violence of a most ferocious nature had overtaken their lives, shows that one woman can truly comprehend the problem and difficulty of another woman. When Hamida says that it is not too late to worry about, Kammo undergoes an inner transformation. Kammo is a poor female child who is deserted by her own father after her mother dies. Amrita Pritam here ironises the so-called role of men who play double role asserting themselves that they are the rescuer of women, who will fight for their protection till the last breath of their lives, but whenever the time comes they turn their back to their women. In the text, Kammo obviously needs much more warmth of love and care after her mother's death. But, it happens opposite of her need. Her father becomes indifferent to her. Pritam thus tries to subvert the role of

father as protector in the patriarchal Hindu society by highlighting the role of mother against the callousness of father. Regarding this, she says, " people often say that when a person's mother dies, even a real father becomes a stepfather "(23). In the case of Kammo too, it seems the father is someone unknown to her. Pritam's protagonist is very much humanistic in the sense that she helps the helpless people at any cost. We are told in the story that,

Hamida and Kammo behaved towards each other like mother and daughter as well as like two close friends, Hamida gave Kammo things to eat and clothes to wear. Kammo's frail body began to fill up, her sallow sunken cheeks became pink and rounded. Hamida washes her hair and then oiled and plaited it. (24-25)

It is not easy to help others for Hamida. She herself is under sufferings- mentally as well as physically. Despite her difficulties, she is ready in keeping others happy. It is because of her humanity developed within herself.

Pritam, by means of her central character, Hamida, has sought to reinterpret the concept of humanity and to demonstrate how far women are successful in following its path. Hamida always swims against the tide of men's cruelty. She helps another character, Taro too. Being herself an exploited woman, Hamida descends like an angel from sky to console Taro who is the mist of sorrow. Taro can express herself entirely and to the fullest of her heart only with Hamida. Hamida thus becomes friend of all. Taro seems to be a bold character in terms of her rebellious nature. She wants to fight against the patriarchy and seems to be assertive to break the bond of marriage "a big fraud"(28). She punctuates her

words by kicking her heels in the ground. In contrary to the character of Taro, Pritam seeks to apply harmony in every difficult situation. So, Pritam's protagonist Hamida listens to the heart rending story of taro and melts with humanistic feeling. She suggests Taro her best and helps as she can.

Despite many problems and sufferings, Hamida tries to be happy. Her family is full of love. Her son is almost two years old. As narrative says, "he was the apple of his father's eye. Rashida loved his son's childish prattle and the endearing way he clung to his legs and calls him 'Abba'. The two played hide and seek in the evenings and had lots of fun [...] the home was full of the child's contagious laughter "(29). Rashida makes his relation to his wife with full love in any situation. He seems very kind when we see him "rubbing the soles of her feet "(8). Moreover, he asks Hamida why she wastes much time and energy. He requests her to have something to eat. In this point, Pritam makes her character Rashida very humane. Rashida even swears by Allah and says, "I can not bear to see you crying all the time. I promise that harm will come to you for the rest of yours life"(10). Rashida abducts Hamida because his uncles have made him take an oath on the Koran that he would abduct the Sahukar's daughter before she wed. However, after he abducts her he never has done any wrong and bad behaviour to her. Rashida speaks in a voice full of emotion; "I will love you as long as I live. I will not behave the way your uncle behaves towards my aunt" (11).In communal violence, there is Hindu Muslim conflict that turns into act of revenge. In the text, Pooro's abduction is no doubt a plan of revenge, but it is very different from other partition texts. Pritam intends to ironise and thus subvert the violence through the humanistic imagination in her main characters, especially Hamida and Rashida.

Hamids's humanly behavoiur to other helpless character and Rashida's love towards Hamida's notice that the text tries to provide a lesson which helps the author subvert the inhuman activities. At the time of delivery, Hamida suffers much more than anyone can guess. Rashida "wished he could take some if not all of the pain from his wife's body into his"(19). If every male member of the family wants to understand his woman as such, women would not have suffered much mentally. This is what Pritam wants to say by presenting Rashida so kind. When Rashida hears the crying of a new born baby, he "breathed a protracted sigh of relief at long last the agony was over and wanted to go inside to massage his wife's limb and give her comfort "(19-20). In this way ,Pritam becomes humanistic by presenting her main character in the level of humanity. Rashida appears much better than other many men who acted most savagely. Hamida comes to see signs of humanity in her abduction. Hamida, despite her lots of miseries, accepts her own home as a "heaven of refuge "(29). As the narrative says:

Hamida wanted to forget that Rashida has abducted and wronged her. She fervently longed to make love to him. After all he was her husband and the father of her son. This alone was true; this alone mattered. The rest is mere prattle and a lie. (29)

To see these lines we come to know how Pritam applies humanism in the text. Pritam tries to prove that humanists always struggle with human sufferings in order to achieve peace and order. In the novel, the protagonist always sacrifices her life for the betterment of other characters such as Kammo, Taro ,mad woman , toy seller and Lajo. As said before, Hamida is a great humanist. Her humanism

comes forth when Hamida takes the orphan child in her house and accepts him as her own son. To see the greatness of Hamida all of the women in the village bless Hamida. They wish Hamida in this way :

"May Allah bless you."

"May Allah fill your home with plenty !"

"May your children live long years!"

"You have earned merit in the sight of Allah!"(33)

The women in the village are happy to see Hamida's act of mercy. Hamida bathes and dresses the baby. She is very kind to the baby. She has nurtured the "tiny bundle of skin and bone with her own breasts for six months, till he too had started to look as fast and chubby as her own Javed"(36). Here, Pritam lets her humanism blossom. In this regard the narrative says:

He had come to look upon Hamida as his mother his eyes followed Her as she moved about the house. He stretched his arms but for Rashida as any child would do towards its father. Why had not the Hindus thought of taking the baby on the first day? Not Why had they let her spend six months of sleepless nights? Why did they let her swallow painful of cumin-seed and turn the blood in her veins to milk in her breasts? Why had they made her wash the child's soiled garments till her hands had become hard and calloused? (36-37)

Though the humanity and brotherhood are men's inventions only women are deeply attached but men are busy to maintain their statuesque. Pritam, through the task of her protagonist makes the kind of justice - communal upliftment men exercise in the society.

Pritam exposes the savagery of men with the tinge of irony in the poor condition of toy-seller, a mad woman. It is the extreme state of draining of humanity in men that they have raped and impregnated the mad woman. Her thin and charred body gives no clue to her age. She is more "like a skeleton than a living person" (30). Women living in Sakkar become stunned after seeing unusual growth of the mad woman's abdomen. The women of Sakkar ask each other: "what sort of man could have done this to her? [...] he must be savage beast to put a mad woman in this condition "(31). Hamida thinks that men became the walking and thinking vultures that do not leave women in peace-even a discarded and senseless mad woman. Pritam, through this event, exposes inhuman act of people at the time of partition in 1947. Men of both Hindu and Muslim religion were like animals that they even can not leave anyone including a woman. Hamida encounters with the dead body of the mad woman lying under the shade of tree who has delivered a child. Certainly it is more despairing and hopeless note. But, Hamida brings the child to her house out of her compassion love and humanity. To this point, Pritam lays bare the animalistic and barbaric instinct of men as governing factors raped under the veil of saviour. And Pritam's humanistic attitude makes Hamida help the orphan child to bring her home and nurture him well.

Furthermore, we sense Pritam's humanistic feelings when Hamida worries about the motherless baby who is taken away from her lap. When Hamida hears, "the boy is on the brink of death; he throws up every drop of milk that goes down his throat," she beats

her head against the wall and shed bitter tears (40). As the novelist writes, "her breasts were bursting with milk and the boy had been weaned away from her. What an abyss yawned between her aching breasts and the child's hungry hips!"(40). Here, Pritam pours her rage upon the society- the men who grabbed the baby after Hamida nourished him well for six months but nobody was ready to accept the child at his birth. Pritam's humanity attacks on inhumanity of patriarchal society where males decide everything important. As the narrative goes, "Hamida's ears burned with rage when she heard of the abduction of Hindu girls by Muslims and of Muslims girls by Hindus. Some had been forced into marriage, some murdered, some stripped and parade naked in the streets"(50). From the above lines, we come to know how the protagonist is aware of the animosity arouse out of communal conflict. Pritam's protagonist always stands for humanity, peace and harmony. So, she does not like violence. The partition riots disturb her mind because the violence goes against humanism. Most of the people, especially women are the victims of the partition riots; "their homes and fields became the haunt of ghosts (50)". They fled during the nights, but some were discovered and killed before they could get very far; others were found murdered many miles away. The love and respect to the humanity of Hamida is manifested several times in the novel. Pritam makes her protagonist so strong that she even helps the women from refugee encampment. Hamida discovers a young girl hiding in their sugarcane field and brings her home. She was one of the Hindu women evacuating to India with other thousands of such men and women. Though all of her friends and relatives had already left the place she was abducted by the barbaric men of the area to quench their thirst. Managing the time to release she became able to escape from there and trying futile attempts to save

her life. Hamida not only took her and gave shelter but also managed her secure release from there towards her destination. As we know from the narrative;

She was from a refugee encampment in the neighboring village. And, like the others was awaiting her turn to be evacuated to India. The camp was guarded by Pakistani soldiers. After sunset Bands of goondas stole in, picked out women they liked and took them or the night; they were returned to the encampment in the morning. The girl had been forced to spend the proceeding nine nights with different men. She had escaped ...and when daylight came had hid herself in the sugarcane field where Hamida had found her. (51)

Through this event, Pritam exposes the brutality of people at the time of partition in 1947. Men of each religion were like kite and vultures that would not leave anyone including the girls from encampment. Further, as the narrative says:

She heard wild stories of what happening in the cities. The streets ran with blood and were said to be cluttered with human corpses, with no one to bury or cremate them; the sink from puterfying flesh hung in the air spreading pestilence. In some cities, barricades were put up to divide the Muslim Zones from the Hindu. News came of battered convoys of Muslims coming across the frontier. Many had died in India; many had fallen by the wayside; and many others had succumbed to their wounds after their journey was over.... Thus passed August 15 of the year 1947.(50)

Apart from physical damage- massacre and arson, the women were the most vulnerable and exposed to molestation by men during the communal holocaust of 1947. Amrita Pritam depicts the abduction in the novella poignantly through the eyes of her protagonist. The description about abduction by both parties, Muslims and Hindus is seen in the novella. Hamida hears the rumors about abduction of "Hindu girls by Muslims and of Muslim girls by Hindus " (50) and a volcanic eruption takes place within her.

All through the text, the narrative emphasizes Rashida's goodness and decency. Rashida even neglects the fact that Hamida's brother had set fire to his crops, and stands by her in every critical situation. Hamida plays an important role to calm down the anger and disgust of Rashida towards her parents and brother and makes him agree to go for the search of her sister-in-law, Lajo. Moreover, he does not hesitate to send her to rattoval knowing fully well that it is Ramchanda's village. He also gives her an opportunity to go to India by taking her to Lahore railing station. The novelist thus probes into the psyche of Rashida. In the heat of emotion of revenge he abducts Hamida, but later on realizes his mistake and changes himself beyond imagination. At heart he is romantic and lovable, kind and considerate. In the last scene of the novel ,Hamida chooses to live in Pakistan with her son and husband eventhough she gets opportunity to come back to India. This reconciliation of Hamida is the triumph of human kindness and goodness in him. Rashida is finally redeemed when he helps save Hamida's sister-in-law Lajo, who had been abducted by a Muslim but is helpful to a Hindu girl Lajo. He rescues Lajo out of many risks and difficulties. It is because of Rashida's help that Hamida could make Lajo free from the chain and give her new spirit. Pritam, thus tries to creat harmony in communal riots.

She is to express her detestation at the disruption of the harmonious flow of humanity. Through the nationalistic framework, she shows the private space of women and the continuity of the order is shared by the people of the time. Rashida is aware of the government proclamation and informs it to Hamida. He tells her that "men are crossing into India to find their wives and are bringing them back. Some have even had children born to them (69). She tries to erase the physical boundary between and among human beings and humanity. Pritam does not bind her character only within household tasks. In the text, Hamida collects much information and does her best in creating peace with the help of her husband. Hamida excuses Rashida that he has committed a crime in abducting her. Hamida thinks; "Rashida certainly committed a crime in abducting me. But thereafter he has been good to me. If he had not helped me, how could I have found you and brought you away? (69) Pritam's characters are like great humanists who are ready in helping each other for the betterment of human life. For them, life, love and humanity are the things which we can't divide by any national and religious boundary.

A subaltern female character, Hamida deprived of any role in national level of politics copes with the troubled situation. Yet she is guided by the concept of humanism. Hamida always swims against the tide of men's cruelty and demonstrates how far women are successful to follow its path. She companies every helpless character in the text. It is Hamida to whom they can express themselves entirely. They think that Hamida can acknowledge their pain and suffering. The mad woman's child becomes the integral part of Hamida's life because the "founding had become a part of her own flesh and blood" (39). Hamida is glad and clasps him to her bosom. Here the attitude of trivialized men is ironied by Hamida and child. During partition, the nationalist leaders of India advocate that Hindus are less communal and the Hindu people get entangled in

communal riots because Muslims coerce them. But Pritam ridicules the nationalist leaders when the Hindus speak in this way:

We don't want this business is to get out of hand, spoke of one of the Hindus a little gently. The child is not related either to you or any of us. This is however a matter of religion and one should not stand in its way. Why put your life in jeopardy? If somebody take it best for you and given us the child of your ow free will. If you want to be reimbursed for the expense you have in curved we will pay you. (38)

Pritam's humanism comes to the fore when Hamida and Rashida reaccept the child who is in a state of coma" (41). Despite of his pride of his religion, Rashida is ready to accept the child once snatched away from them. Rashida here seems more humanist than religious.

At the end of the novel, Pritam artistically maintains peace and harmony from the humane characteristic of her characters. Hamida challanges the recovery operation of India which keeps women in double subordination. Hamida gets chance to go to her brother , still she wants to stay with her husband and son in Pakistan . Despite her interest to meet her people and change her mind to go there, she chooses to live at Pakistan caring and nursing her children. This shows that she does not want to hurt her husband's family and herself again. Thus, Pritam leaves a lesson that helps subvert the patriarchal violence during and aftermaths of partition.

## **Subverting Patriarchal Violence through Politics of Irony in "Family Ties"**

Baldwin's, "Family ties " is written in 1996. The story takes place in 1971. It is written in the conflict of Indo-Pak war that partitioned Pakistan into two nation states Pakistan and Bangladesh. As we look at the setting of the text, it covers the time from 1947 to 1971. "Family Ties " tells the story of Chandini Kaur who represents the victims of the partition period and the narrator girl herself belongs to the new generation women aftermath of the partition. We see Baldwin's politics of irony that subverts the patriarchal violence during and aftermath of partition period.

Baldwin heightens the subaltern subjectivity of a ten/eleven years old female child narrator who "mobilizes political irony to radically map the micro politics of power relation between men and women vis-à-vis partition violence (B. Pandey," Paradigm" 108). Baldwin touchingly ironises the familial violence in parallel to partition violence. She ironises the violence within the family ties of a home by "placing at the center the silenced sub alters subjectivity" of a narrator girl in a manner that helps challenge the patriarchy offering a critical distance of resistance to the marginalized and the males- Inder and dad (08). Inder and dad are always "smart" and they can always ask "why" to justify their superiority (21). The father is of the opinion that the honour of the family lactated in the chastity of women is more important than the daughter's life. He even calls her "kukri" (22). He casts her as an animal to be killed without compunction: "if the Muslims come and your sister is in danger you must shoot his sister to save her from being abducted by the Muslims when there is a war". The patriarchy thus locates the honour of the family in woman's body. The writer evokes irony that the patriarchal family ties are based on the "blood and honour", which are the only duties of males to

carry on (32). The narrator girl on the otherhand, is undaunted in her critical nature. Through the narrator girl, Shauna Singh Baldwin raises a question on female's position. She questions patriarchy. The narrator tries to challenge her father and keeps on resisting him with her subaltern female subjectivity till the end of the story. She looks very evaluative towards female problems. She remarks that she has "begun to know what pain it means to be a women"(27). Thus Baldwin is very much ironical toward the society by presenting the narrator girl as a politically conscious being.

Baldwin ironizes the familial violence with the family ties of a home by challenging the patriarchy through the consciousness of a young narrator girl. Within a family too there is a ranking of position of male members and females. The narrator girl, only because she is a girl, is under the domination of her brother Inder. Inder wants to become smart at every time. He uses his sister's book to hide his cigarettes by warning her : "I am his only son...I will kill you"(35). His threatening shows how fragile the family ties become. There is discriminatory attitude to locate a girl in fragile condition and a boy in power. In the text, Baldwin's irony reveals that in contrast to Inder, the only reason for such discriminatory attitude is that the narrator girl is a female, while Inder is a male member of the family. Inder is taken as the one "who will took after" his parents when they get old. But Inder is losing his track. In this regard the narrator girl says:

We share a bathroom, where I find a sick sweet smell syringes.hidden behind a rusty pipe, and cigarette ash like bird droppings, but still mummy refers to him as 'Inderji'. When talking to the cook he tries to tempt his non existent appetite with everything from imported camembert cheese to Swiss chocolates [...] Now he's a seller as well as a buyer. (35-36)

The irony in the story therefore targets to hit at this bourgeois nature of the male character exercised in the patriarchy. The irrationality of the patriarchy gets the ironic treatment through the sharp consciousness of the narrator girl who has been the incessant victim of the familial violence after partition.

The narrator girl is very much curious about her father's 1947 partition experience. She learns many things with the "imperfect understanding that all of us born after 1950 must share" (109). As she knows about the past, she is worried about her father's sister Chandini Kaur. Chandini Kaur is abducted and raped by Muslims during the partition. After she is raped and abducted, she is "dead" for her father. Her father does not allow Chandini Kaur, though she is his own sister, to come to the family only because she is abducted and raped by a man from another community. The honour of his family is supposed to be lost if Chandini Kaur, an abducted woman joins the family again. Chandini Kaur has a Muslim child and this is why she is never accepted in her father's house. Later the child is drowned by the mother herself, still she is not accepted because of the "shame she has brought on brother's family and community" (109). To be abducted and have a child from another community's man is not Chandini's fault. It is a great mistake of the patriarchal notion of community that males are free to do every evil task. Through the plight of Chandini Kaur, Baldwin reminds us that "a woman's modesty signifies the masculinity of her community. The hapless woman becomes the symbol of violence as the shame and subjection of her community is represented in her" (109). Here lies the irony that a community foregrounds the honour and shame in the life of a hapless woman. Despite the privileged concept of the family and community, the narrator girl raises many questions against the male domination. She ironically undercuts the conventional family ties by questioning against the patriarchy: "Is it worse to be caught

converted, killed or raped by muslims that to be killed by a brother?"(26). This is the question that haunts her much. The narrator girl goes on resisting the patriarchal domination. She collects her courage to enter father's room and tries to know about Chandini Kaur. Her action to enter into her father's "closet" and open the "attache case", which is not permitted to her, to "know" the reality about her aunt, Chandini Kaur is a bold step for the women's liberation (35).The narrator girl feels "no rush of fear" and wants "to shout at them "to uplift her position in the family. Baldwin's politics of irony is apparent when the narrator girl compares" the small face of a woman whose name is never mentioned, and the set face of a man who has upheld his family's honour' (26). Similar to the father, Inder is willing to kill his sister by shooting her with his own hands. The males in the family the father and Inder himself, locate themselves in the power.

Because of her curiosity about Chandini Kaur's history, the narrator girl collects many informations . Her aunt is the representation of all the women victims in the partition days of 1947. The self-conscious narrator girl ironically uncovers her thoughts in the following way:

I hold the letter against the slight rise of my chest in gratitude. Dad did not kill him sister. I tell myself I knew it all along. How can I have been so base, so vile, so ungrateful a daughter as to have let such a thought enter my mind? He was just preparing us, as a father must in a time of war, for all that he could forsee. And Inder ; how could I have been so silly as to think he was serious when he said,"I will" .He was just playing at being a man, as he always does I must have imagined his avoidance afterward.

Mummy always says I am such a fearfilled girl it will be difficult to find me a good family. (28)

The narrator girl being politically conscious speaks ironically in the above quoted lines .She addresses herself as an 'ungrateful daughter' to her father in the sense that the father has prepared her well in the time of war. It is a great irony to her position in the family. It generally seems that parent-child relationship is more flexible when the children are very small .As girls grow up and reach adolescence, they are treated in a more authoritarian, distant manner. Instead of involving them in every discussion and decision within the family, they simply mean trouble. Every important decisions are considered to be men's responsibility because of the patriarchal structure of the family.

Baldwin's sharp irony is apparent when the narrative tells us about Chandini Kaur's poor condition. Though Chandini is a member of the family, her name is never spoken after her abduction. After being abducted or raped the women were forced to commit suicide because their families were not in the position to accept them anymore, rather these women were thought to be a huge burden, or they had become impure beings in the eyes of their relatives.The same happens in the case of Chandini Kaur.,the plight of women like Chandini Kaur. If a speaker's style departs notably from whatever the reader considers the normal way of saying a thing, or the way normal for this speaker, the reader may suspect irony. In the text,this ironic meaning undercuts the validity of patriachal violence. As a result of her abduction and rape ,she gives birth "to a Musalman bastard" (30).To have the Muslim baby is not Chandini's intention rather it is the result of the circumstances in the partition violence perpetrated on women. The partition violence the partition violence includes the familial and communal violence in

which women always remained essentially at the receiving end as primary victims. Women like Chandini Kaur during violence, are the central victims. Instead of understanding Chandini's plight, the family calls her "completely pagal" (30), while the same person Dad rejects the possibility that Inder is "a mad boy"(36). Dad rather blames the psychiatrist as "a fool, probably foreign returned"(36). Actually Inder needs a psychiatrist. But Dad is not ready to accept the doctor's advice about going to see a psychiatrist. The father makes an outcaste about Chandini Kaur a completely pagal although she is very much innocent. In the contrary, he even rejects the doctor's advice about visiting a psychiatrist. This shows how the discriminations are rooted in the patriarchal values. The narrator girl views all these things from a distance and is able to undermine the patriarchal conventions by revealing the discrimination between son and daughter in the family. The narrator girl's complains to herself is for ironic purpose:

I want how I want to tell her about the Moonlight Princess, to ask her if her relatives in Pakistan might know her. But I have learned, learned that to be a part of family you have to agree to keep its secretes. Because there are penalties to be paid by kukris who crow. After all, there is nothing in my history book about Chandini Kaur who became Jenahara Begum and who is dead for my father and mad besides, nor any woman like her. (34)

The above passage locates the narrator girl with a critical perspective to Indian patriarchy and the history texts as well. The irony lying hidden in the texture of the quote is that there is a gap between the consciousness of the narrator girl and the patriarchal notion in the family. The narrator girl wants to reveal all thing she knows of her aunt, Chandini Kaur .She wants to read the unmasked history of Chandini Kaur's

pain and trauma in the history books. But, there is nothing written as such. Neither the family member listens her, nor the partition history texts uncover it. Baldwin, through the narrator, in one sense says something less than he means so that he can make the text ironic. As mentioned before, Baldwin, unlike other partition generation writers, interrogates the patriarchal nature of the Indian society by placing a teenage narrator girl at the center in a different manner that helps her avoid marginalizing women. The irony available in the story equips the narrator girl with "a much-needed critical perspective" which supports to subvert the violence within a family as well as in a single society (106).

"Family Ties," hence entails irony as a device since the text possesses many ironic instances. Baldwin uses a politics of irony that helps subvert the patriarchal violence in a family and society as well. The narrator girl, in the text, is violated by her family members. We reader could sense the violence upon her through the critical perspective of the narrator girl herself:

The hens all look the same to me—brownish-white with frightened eyes, silly kukri's just like me. I look at the closest cage and one-step forward. She holds her head high when she crows, trusts her breast at cage and seems unafraid to die, so I say, 'That One.' A moment later, her head is severed and Nand Singh throws her in his shopping bags. Although mummy's frown at my plate warns that no one will marry a fatty. I eat the curried kukri that night, hoping her courage will nourish mine. (24)

Her irony reveals that in contrast to Inder, the only reason for such a discriminatory attitude is that the narrator girl is a female, while Inder is a male member of the family.

The narrator girl's parents foreground their son, Inder as the one who looks after them in their old age, while the daughter, the narrator girl herself is taken as a vulnerable 'kukri' to be protected by shooting her to death in the face of the daughter of her abduction (24). By revealing the discriminations between son and daughter within a family, Baldwin shows sharp irony that unbalances and undermines the patriarchal conventions.

## Conclusion

Through *The Skeleton* and "Family Ties," Amrita Pritam and Shauna Singh Baldwin depict the massive and dreadful familial and communal partition violence perpetrated on the body of women. Amrita Pritam, through the concept of humanity attacks the violence, especially the masculinist propensity upon women. Pritam applies the tool of humanism in *The Skeleton* to undermine the inhuman atrocities done by the males in patriarchal convention during partition. Pritam's humanism foregrounds the cruelty of the violence and pain, trauma, suffering, displacement, loss, abduction, rape etc. wherein the worst hits were the women. Thousands of helpless women were raped and kidnapped as communal and political tension let loose in the Indo-Pak boarder villages. The violence upon women rendered thousands of innocent lives as destitute. Yet, there were people who still hoped in humanism to survive and were waiting for their dreams to come true. By so doing, Pritam presents her main character Hamida equipped with humanity. The humanity that comes from her heart nurtures the other who is in jeopardy. Through *The Skeleton*, Pritam tries to create peace and harmony within a family and community as well. Pritam identifies her protagonist, in the text, as an undaunted female and a humanist who always struggles for the betterment of human life. Throughout the novel, Pritam presents the greatness and humanistic behaviour of her main characters. This applies especially to Hamida, who despite living in poor condition helps other women assuming that she is in a better position in comparison to them. Pritam's humanistic imagination equips Hamida with humanity that leaves a positive lesson to those who are guided by violent task during and in the aftermath of partition.

Similarly, Baldwin in "Family Ties" uses irony as a narrative tool which helps subvert the patriarchal nature of violence meted out during and aftermath of partition of India. Baldwin presents her protagonist, the narrator girl herself conscious of every issue in the family as well as in the society. She plays a politics to ironise the patriarchal notion. "Family Ties" uses the subversive political irony to destabilizes the bourgeois patriarchal nature of the society. The silenced subaltern teenage female character, in "Family Ties," views the patriarchal notion of the family tie with her critical perspective that helps subvert the deeply rooted patriarchy. The narrator girl does not have a position as her brother Inder possesses. Her father casts her as an animal which can be killed without compunction to save the honor of the family. The father thus locates the honor of the family in women's body. The narrator girl on the otherhand, is undaunted in her critical nature. Through the narrator girl, Shauna Singh Baldwin raises a question in female's position. She questions patriarchy. The narrator girl tries to challenge her father and keeps on resisting him with her subaltern female subjectivity till the end of the story. Baldwin's sharp irony is apparent when the narrative tells us about Chandini Kaur's poor condition. This ironic meaning undercuts the validity of patriarchal violence. Baldwin, unlike other partition generation writers, interrogates the patriarchal nature of the Indian society by placing a teenage narrator girl at the center in a different manner that helps her avoid marginalizing women.

### Works Cited

- Baldwin, Shauna Sing. "Family Ties." *English Lessons and Other Stories*.  
Fredericton Goose Lane, 1996. 21-36.
- Butalia, Urvashi. "A Tradition of Martyrdom." *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*. Durham: Duke UP, 2000. 153-71.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Community, State and Gender: Some Reflections on the Partition of India." *The Oxford Literary Review* 16.1-2 (1994): 31-67.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Muslim and Hindu Men and Women: Communal Stereotypes and Partition of India*. London: Zed books. 1995.
- Gilmartin, David. Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57.4 (Nov. 1998): 1068. 124-137.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Menon, Ritu and Kamala Bhasin. *Borders and Boundaries: Women in India's Partition*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press. 1998.
- Pritam Amrita. *The Skeleton and Other Writings*. Tr. Khuswant Singh. Bombay: Jaico, 1964.
- Pandey, Beerendra. "A Paradigm Shift in the Representation of Violence in Partition Short Stories by Women: Political Irony in Shauna Singh Baldwin's Family Ties". *The Atlantic Literature Review* 5.3-4 (July- December 2004): 105-11.
- \_\_\_\_\_,ed. *Intellectual History Reader: A Critical Introduction*. Kathmandu: M. K. Publishers and Distributors, 2005.
- Pandey, Gyanendra. "In Defense of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu Muslim Riots in India Today." *Representations* 37.1 (Winter 1992): 27-55.

Talbot, Ian. "Literature and the Human Drama of the 1947 Partition." *Region and Partition: Bengal, Punjab, and the Partition of the Subcontinent*. Ed. Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh. Karachi: OUP, 1999. 228-68.

Ray, Bharati. "Women and Partition: Some Question." *From Independence Towards Freedom: Indian Women Since 1947*. Eds. Bharati Ray & Aparna Basu. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 1999: 1-18.