

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

**Pooro's Transformation in Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar***

**A Thesis Submitted to  
The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University  
in the Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in English**

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**September 2006**

**Tribhuvan University**  
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**Letter of Approval**

This thesis entitled "Pooro's Transformation in Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar*," by Rambabu Poudel, has been submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University. It has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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## **Acknowledgements**

Any accomplishment requires the help and support of many people. This research is the outcome of several people's kind cooperation and invaluable suggestions.

I am deeply indebted to my respected teacher Dr. Beerendra Pandey who has graced me with kind guidance, persistently inspiring suggestions and invaluable academic supports during the course of my writing.

Prof. Chandra Prakash Sharma, the Head of the Department, deserves all the gratitudes for arranging us the thesis class. Had there not been his effort and kindly support by my respected teachers Dr. Pandey, Bishnu Sapkota, Tika Lamsal and others, my thesis could not have come today in this form. I cannot express my gratitude to them in words.

I would like to acknowledge my debt to my friends Pam Gurung, Sadan, Bijaya, Krishna, Dinesh, Bhim and Uttam for their suggestions and ideas. Heartily grateful I am to my roommate Madhav dai, who all the time inspire me and help me in structural and grammatical issues.

My profound gratitudes go to my parents, grandma and nanu for their support and encouragement throughout the research period patiently.

My brothers Suman, Sujan, Motu, Rajendra and Rabindra deserve all the gratitudes for their kind help and support.

In the like manner, I extend my gratefulness to all the respected teachers of the Central Department of English and others who helped me directly and indirectly to accomplish this research writing.

Lastly, I would like to thank Jeeten Maharjan of Jee Computer Center, Kirtipur, for his excellent typing tasks.

September 8, 2006

Rambabu Poudel

## **Abstract**

The objective of this study is to explore the psychological transformation of the subaltern female victim of the patriarchal violence during the partition riots in India through the protagonist-victim 'Pooro' in Amrita Pritam's novel *Pinjar*. Unlike other vulnerable female victims, Pooro stands herself in a position from which she challenges the patriarchy-based ideologies and practices of the family, society and even the state. The discarding and disregarding of her by her own family, community and religion arise a certain type of epiphany into her and she transforms herself into love and humanism. She searches her identity in the loving nature and in humanistic acts rejecting any type of familial, social or religious identity. The psychological transformation of her is due to her reaction to the patriarchal nature of the society and its role in fomenting violence of the time of partition in 1947. Pritam's foregrounding of a female victim through love and humanism makes patriarchy's inhumanity even more cruel and callous.

Kirtipur,

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## Chapter – 1

### **Introduction: Feminist History of 1947 and Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar***

I am a woman  
I want to raise my voice  
because communalism affects me  
In every communal riot  
my sisters are raped  
my children are killed  
my men are targeted  
my world is destroyed  
and then  
I am left to pick up the pieces  
to make a new life  
It matters little if I am a Muslim, Hindu or Sikh  
and yet I cannot help my sisters  
for fear that I may be killed  
or that they may be harmed.

(qtd. in Butalia, "Community" 34)

The abovementioned poem depicts the real agony of a woman who was the direct victim of the Partition violence of India in 1947. The woman's voice is suppressed by the patriarchy-dominated community. She tries to differentiate herself

with the religious dogmatism of identification. She tries to be secular in one hand, while on the other, she wants to rebel against the patriarchy-based communalism.

Amrita Pritam's heartrending novel *Pinjar* presents a character 'Pooor' who crosses through the similar trauma and sufferings like the woman of the poem. Amrita Pritam foregrounds her protagonist-victim 'Pooor' in such a way that through Pooor's circumstances, she tries to capture the trauma, violence, sufferings, homelessness, anarchism and chaos of the people during the partition riots.

But the history of India has ignored the violent events and massacre of partition. The officials and the historians only focused the political scenario of the independence of India from British rule and separation of Pakistan from India as a Muslim independent country whereas, the traumatic and horrific events of the partition were ignored. The history of violence, as commented by Gyanendra Pandey, "has been treated in the historiography of modern India as *aberration* and as *absence*: aberration in the sense that violence is seen as something removed from the general run of Indian history" (27). Thus, the Indian history is far behind in capturing the real agony and sufferings of the partition, rather it is based on the other stuffs as Aparna Basu notes:

The history of Partition is based largely on official documents as a history of government-to-government debate, concentrating on the differences between the congress and the League and on the British Policy of divide and rule. This history has ignored the dislocation of human lives and the loss, trauma, pain and violence people suffered.

(271)

On the midnight of 15 August 1947, the people of India entered into the new era of independence with joy and happiness, but the people of the border side were severely traumatized by the partition violence. On the one hand, there was the celebration of freedom, on the other, thousands of people were struggling with the life and death. It should be remembered that "'at the stroke of the midnight hour . . . when India awoke to life and freedom,' thousands were being massacred and driven out of their homes, lives were being disrupted at all levels as families were destroyed, their members separated and scattered" (Basu 284). Historical studies have tended to focus on the cause of partition rather than its impact. Little is known about the history of these people and how they dealt with the trauma, pain and dislocation of enforced migration. Addressing the partition riots, Urvashi Butalia states, "the story of partition, the uprooting and dislocation of people, was accompanied by the story of the rape, abduction and widowhood of thousands of women on both sides of the newly formed borders" ("Abducted" 92). The partition violence claimed at least a million lives, while a further ten million people were uprooted from their ancestral homes. The history of India is silent in response to this great human tragedy. In the same ground of history's negligence towards that great human trauma, Urvashi Butalia, in her another article, comments:

Hardly any attempt has been made to record the experiences of ordinary people on both sides of the border. Within a short space of time, sometimes overnight, millions of people were turned into refugees. How did they cope with this dislocation? What equipped them to deal with the trauma that must have accompanied this uprooting? How did they rebuild their lives? [. . .] what have been the implications of this large exodus, or influx of refugees in terms of



communal, sectarian strife? These and a host of other questions, remain largely unanswered today. ("Community" 31-32)

Such was the situation of the victims and that sort of chaos and state of confusion were prevailing at that time. But, it is a matter of shame to tell that "in this great human event, human voices are strangely silent", and the historians turned their deaf ears towards including this type of heartrending event in the Indian history (Talbot 39). Along with its violent consequences, partition was really the "ensuing turmoil" to cope with and it marked a "watershed" event in the history of India and Pakistan (Menon and Bhasin, "Abducted" 1).

Though the historians neglected the dark and traumatic part of the partition, a few conscious writers tried their best to address "the human agonies which accompanied Partition" (Talbot 39). Hundreds of novels, short stories and plays have taken the human sufferings, the physical and psychological impact of the violence, abduction, migration and resettlement as their theme. The partition experiences were so horrific and violent that they were almost too harrowing to document. Very few victims have kept written records or diaries. The writers try to ponder into the depth of reality with such records. But, still the exactness of the violence cannot be imagined as Bharati Ray says, "the exact scale and intensity of the actual tragedy - of plunder and rape, murder and abduction, migration and dislocation - will probably never be known" (56). In such a spiteful situation of anarchism and chaos, the few writings based on the personal experiences of the victims tried to present the tentative scenario of the situation as far as possible. The stories based on the partition violence help people understand about the type of sufferings and the sufferers. Focusing on the significance of partition fiction and women's voice, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin state, "partition fiction has been a far richer source both because it provides popular

and astringent commentary on the politics of Partition and because, here and there, we find women's voices speaking for themselves" ("Her Body" 59).

"Perhaps it has been too painful, too difficult" according to Menon and Bhasin, in another article, "to separate personal experience from corroborated fact, too hazardous, at least for those who tried to record it, to claim 'objectively'" ("Abducted" 2). Finally, they come to the conclusion that "so far only some 'fiction' seems to have tried to assimilate the enormity of the experience" ("Abducted" 2). On the same ground of literature's definition as the mirror of the society, Mushirul Hasan is true to declare that "only the literature truly evokes the sufferings of the innocent, whose pain is more universal and ultimately a vehicle of more honest reconciliation than political discourse" (2667).

Thus, it is the fact that the writings try to explore the reality of the human dimensions. In the case of partition violence, women and their sufferings occupy the great part to document. Though it is the bitter reality that the women were the worst victims of the partition, their experiences of partition and the physical and psychological scars abduction left behind have not really been written or spoken about. According to Aparna Basu, it is because "many of them were illiterate and even if they would write, they found the experiences were too harrowing to report" (284). It is also because "women usually do not want to talk or write about rape and sexual assaults" (Basu 284). Stressing on women's inability to record their trauma in history, Urvashi Butalia forwards her opinion that:

Women have found it difficult to give voice to such experience; they have remained outside the pale of history. Historical silence is compounded by familial silence: these are things that cannot be talked

about; tales of heroism can find a place in collective memory, but abduction and rape must remain at the margins. ("Community" 63)

Women of the then period were so much suppressed by the male-dominated family, community, religion and even the state that it was difficult for them to speak against the social norms and values. In these circumstances, a woman cannot even express her will or desire. The expression of the rape and molestation, abduction and sexual assaults were not possible for them, as these activities made them 'polluted' or 'impure' according to the patriarchal norms.

Still, a few female writers dared to explore the female sufferings both physical and psychological during the partition violence. They not only focused the traumatic and horrific side of the partition but also tried their best to read out the inner psychological feelings of the women, who were the direct victim of the violence. Amrita Pritam is one of such writers. Out of her twenty-eight novels, *Pinjar* is a prominent one, which explores the real agony of the partition. Her writings, in their totality, reflect the human predicament, particularly as seen through the eyes of a woman. In the novel, 'Pooor' is not only the protagonist but also the mouthpiece of Pritam. The writer shows the every upheavals of the then period of violence. The familial standpoint, its relationship with the community and religion, communal background and religious disharmony between Hindus and Muslims are the basic poles in which the story of the novel revolves around. The novel has a series of setting since pre-partition to post-partition. The scenario before the partition; and rape, abduction, killings and displacement of the people during partition, and also the rescue process of abducted women after partition are very realistically presented in the novel. The religious enmity between Hindus and Muslims and the act of showing

other culture's depravity by abducting their womenfolk are the basic traumatic parts or the basic issues of the novel.

As the novel tries to show the real picture of the partition period, every event of the novel resembles the social reality. How the helpful and harmonious neighbors of the community, who had been living in a peaceful manner since lost past, became the killers of one another just because of their opposite religious doctrine, is the most striking and heartrending fact of the partition violence. Women became the most vulnerable creatures at that time as both of the religions considered women's chastity as their religious or cultural honor. The males of one culture were dying to abduct, rape or even make concubine to the women of other culture. This sort of practices ruined the life of almost one million women of both the religions and their respective families during the partition period.

Either a Hindu family or a Muslim one, the male-domination or male's supremacy was deeply rooted among the family members. A woman, either a mother, or a wife, or a daughter had to follow the orders of the senior male members of the family – father, husband or even son. The male members of the family could make any type of decision in the family. Women were considered as indoor servants, whose sole duty was to serve their father or husband and the children. No view, opinion or desires of women were given places in any sort of decision-makings. Thus the familial norms and values were solely decided by the male-members and the females had to follow them without any sort of comment and reasoning upon.

Not only at the familial level, but the women of that period were dominated at the communal level too. All the communal practices were ideologies of the renowned male members of the community. Every action and reaction taken by the board of the community would be male-centered. The community never felt the lack of women's

participation in communal works. The community used to consider women as the house servants and the childbearing machines. "Pre-Nuptial Virginity" and "Post-Nuptial Pativratiya" were the communal chains to bind the women morally, whereas that was not applied in the case of male (Ray 58). Criticizing the 'double standards of morality' for men and women that were decreed by the Hindu prescriptive texts in India and perpetuated by custom, Bharati Ray says, "a widow was not culturally allowed to marry (in middle class families), while a widower was encouraged, even often persuaded to marry" (61). This was the social construction of that time. Not only this, Ray again provides another example of the double standards of morality: "a wife had to be physically and mentally chaste to her *one* husband but polygamy was permitted for men" (61). That sort of biasness was prevailing in the society, where men were free to do everything; there was no question of morality for male, whereas females had lots of restrictions. For communities and families, the women were seen as "taking upon themselves the task of preserving community and racial honor" (Butalia, "Community" 52). Here, the honor, as Paola Bacchetta states, "is male honor, which according to specific historical-contextual constructions of masculinity, required male control over the sexuality of female kin" (572).

The social and the communal construct of that time was so much so dominated by the patriarchy that in order to prevent their so called honor or respect of their community and religiosity, "male family members provided them (the females) with poison and swords, built fires for them to jump into, and pointed to wells they should drown themselves in", rather than surrendering themselves in front of the enemies of 'other' religion (Bacchetta 573). At the particular situation, men thought themselves so powerful that in the name of so called honor, they "deemed to murder of their own kinswomen a heroic alternative to interreligious marriage and conversion" (Bacchetta

572). In those circumstances of violence, massacre and sufferings, obviously, "the impact of violence and forced migration on women was different from its impact on men, precisely because the position of women within the family is a vulnerable one" (Das 73). In the case of raped and abducted women, it was so difficult or it was almost impossible to cope with the situation because the women who "had been victims of rape or molestation had been brutally rejected by their own relatives" (Das 70). Butalia, referring the same case of missing women, shows the paradox in the behaviour of the male members of the family towards their womenfolk that though "many of the reports were filed by men, [. . .] later it was these men who often refused to take women back" ("Community" 53). The reason behind the refusal was that "they have been 'polluted' through sexual contact with men of the other race" (Butalia, "Abucted" 103).

The familial norms, communal or social boundaries and religious ideologies were yoked together and made one in the name of finding out their honor on the body of women. The patriarchal domination in all these sectors including the state politics was really intolerable for the vulnerable and soft-hearted women. The basic cause of the trauma of the partition was the religious enmity between Hindus and Muslims. "One could not believe that the same Hindus and Muslims who had lived together for centuries would now find it impossible to live together" (Das 66). The religious doctrine was so much deeply-rooted in the minds of the people that the friendly neighbors and their harmonious relationship broke up suddenly and they became thirsty of one another's blood. More than that, the body of women from other culture was the carving stone on which they could imprint the victory of their culture.

The cultural doctrine was so much so deeply rooted in the minds of the women that in order to save their so-called religious honor, many women took their lives

themselves. "In Thoa Khalsa, some 90 women threw themselves into a well in order to preserve the 'sanctity' and 'purity' of their religion, and to avoid conversion" (Butalia, "Community" 37). Not only that, according to Urvashi Butalia, in her same article, "untold numbers of women, particularly in Sikh families were ready to be killed ('martyred' in the term that is used) by their kinsmen in order to 'protect' them from being converted" (36). The religious books, social norms and traditions were particularly based on the theme of male-supremacy and marginalization of women. Regarding that sort of texts, Bharati Ray objects in her article that "Hindu religious texts in India had prescribed strict rules governing women's behaviour patterns and her physical purity. Concern for paternity and caste purity had led to a lightening of control over women's sexuality" (57). Indian women, with that type of dominated psychology and suppressed thinking, could not understand the imposed patriarchal doctrine to them. An abducted woman, during her rescue process commented, "Why are you so particular to take me to India? What is left in me now of religion or chastity?" (Butalia, "Abducted" 95). That sort of internalized feeling of self-hatred of the women was the product of male's supremacy and their control over women during the period.

Amrita Pritam's most popular novel *Pinjar* has the same setting of Partition of India and the story captures the overall scenario of the violence. The protagonist of the novel, 'Poro', is the victim of the familial, social and religious doctrine of that period. Set in pre-Partition Punjab, the novel begins with Poro's abduction, a 14-year-old Hindu girl, by a Muslim man, Rashida, few days before her arranged wedding. The motives behind the abduction are the familial and religious enmity of the two families the Sahukars (Poro's family) and the Shaikhs (Rashida's family). After fifteen days of abduction, Poro flees from her abductor but, in spite of being a

virgin, she is rejected by her family. They refuse to accept her because of the dishonor of their family and the fear of rejection they get from the community. She returns to Rashida who marries her and renames her as 'Hamida', a Muslim name. Thus, Pooro finds herself between Hindu and Muslim religion and finally she rejects to be any. The disregarding of her by her own family and community brings a type of epiphany in her. She tries to be secular and devotes her rest of life helping others who are the victims of similar social constructions.

After facing every familial, communal and religious upheaval, Pooro stands herself in order to struggle with every outcome of these doctrines. In this dissertation, the researcher will try to explore the inner sensibility of Pooro in such a way that after crossing through the every traumatic situation that the community threw at her, she develops a type of epiphany within herself that destroys the familial, social and religious boundaries and follows the trends of secular humanism through feministic perspective. Thus, the researcher, here, will try to show a type of 'transformation' on Pooro that is the product of the painful experiences she receives from these circumstances. Standing above all such doctrines, Pooro finds solace, peace and loving state, and devotes rest of her life in humanistic acts.



## Chapter – 2

### **Feminist Reconstruction of Abduction of Women in 1947 and the Subsequent Recovery Operation**

Abduction of the women of the 'other' community was the major heartrending trend of the partition violence of 1947. But this large scale abductions of women from all three communities: Hindu, Sikh and Muslim are less prioritized in the Indian History. No official estimates exist of the exact number of such abductions, but it is safe to assume that there were approximately one hundred thousand. In one article, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin forward a data that "the official estimate of the number of abducted women was placed at fifty thousand Muslim women in India and thirty-three thousand non-Muslim women in Pakistan" ("Her Body" 68). In the times of external war or civil war, as Bharati Ray points, "it is women who are inevitably singled out for particularly humiliating treatment-molestation, rape, abduction or forcible marriage and it is they who have to suffer for the imposed ignominy" (14).

Women's bodies are considered by Indian Men, Hindu, Muslim or Sikh as the repository of men's honor. Since the Hindus and the Muslims at that point of time of partition perceived one another as harmful enemies, they sought to take revenge by inflicting insults on the womenfolk so that memories of the injury would persist. To plunder women's bodies through rape, molestation and unwanted pregnancy was to indicate that the enemy had occupied the most intimate possessions of the men to whom the women belonged. Thus, "a woman falls into the position of debtor", as Ray indicates, "whenever the normal order of society or family is disturbed, and whenever politics and hostilities are set in motion" (14).

During partition, though all classes and castes on both sides of the border were victims of murder and forcible evacuation, the women were the worst affected. Through rape and abduction, women became central to the whole act of violence. In this way it has become amply clear that the story of partition is a deeply gendered narrative in which women were centrally implicated in a variety of ways. Aparna Basu, in her article "Uprooted women", considers abduction as the major element of women's sufferings: "What emerges from this brief exploration of the human dimensions of partition is the agony and suffering of women as a result not only of the massacres and migrations but of abductions" (284). In the same article Basu states how women were the worst victims of the partition:

Women in this communal holocaust became the most vulnerable and least protected victims. The brutality that accompanied Partition deliberately targeted women, for the wounds inflicted on them scarred and tainted entire communities. Some women were forcibly abducted, while others were left behind and lost in the confusion as their families ran for their lives. (271)

The partition violence of India in 1947 is instigated by men but its greatest impact is felt by women. It's the men who wanted the division of India. Partition of India is the men's ideology, men's interest. It's the men who took the credit of Independent India and emergence of Muslim Country-Pakistan. But the women of both side of the border of India and Pakistan had to pay a heavy charge for that. The war between Hindus and Muslims was sought by the men but the antiwar supporter women became the worst victims. In violent conflict, it is women who were raped, widowed and whose children and husbands were sacrificed in the name of national integrity and unity. Not only this, it was women's job to painfully build a future from

the ashes. It is obvious to declare that any type of communal confrontations were normally engineered and led by men. Women were often primary victims, having to bear the brunt of the effects of communal violence, whether it is rape or abduction, loss of male members of the family or homelessness or even the sacrifice of their female kin by the family-members for the other's safe landing during the riots. On the whole, women have rarely been active in communal riots and have a clear interest in avoiding them, but the body of women is the mostly used battle field in communal riots. In the partition violence of 1947 and in other several violence after that men's brevity over the body of women was much common. The violence over them was intolerable and heartbreaking. Urvashi Butalia shows the trauma and victimization of women by the existing religious and cultural belief in the following ways:

There are accounts of innumerable rapes, of women being stripped naked and paraded down streets, of their breasts being cut off, of their bodies being carved with the religious symbols of the other community. And then there are other, less obvious, traumas: for many, particularly middle class women, the dislocation meant that the option of marriage, supposedly a part of 'normal' everyday society, was closed off and they had to live alone, or as 'spinsters' with their families. ("Community" 37)

In this way, the particular religious belief and the social construction made the women to be victimized. The psychological trauma faced by the spinsters is the social construct, whereas the act of kidnapping and raping the women of the other culture is the religious construct. During the violence, in many of the Sikh communities, the women took their lives themselves in order to save their honor. The honor is in fact the religious and communal honor of the patriarchy. Urvashi Butalia presents an

example of mass suicide of women in Thoa Khalsa village, she writes, "... Sardarni Gulab Singh[Kaur], sitting at the well, [...] did *ardaas* in two words, saying *sacche badshah*, it is to save Sikhi that we are offering up our lives ... forgive us and accept our martyrdom ... and saying those words, she jumped into the well, and some eighty women followed her ... they also jumped in" ("Community" 39).

Forcible conversion of women to another religion and forcible marriage by the male of another religion were very much practiced in that period. And the religious and communal honor was so much deep-rooted in the minds of the people, especially the women that they were ready to sacrifice themselves rather than surrender. Menon and Bhasin, in the same issue, say:

. . . the fear of abduction, or of falling into the hands of the enemy, compelled hundreds of women to take their own lives or be killed by their own families and literally thousands of others to carry packets of poison on their persons in the eventuality that they might be captured.  
("Her Body" 69)

The abduction of women, the rape of the women, unwanted pregnancy or forced marriage of the women by the men of other culture and other several types of physical and psychological sufferings and victimization are the outcomes of the patriarchy-based communal and religious domination over women. The familial and communal honor and religious ideologies were created in such a way that dishonor of women would resemble dishonor of the whole society, community and religion. Besides the people, the government was equally responsible to dominate women. Menon and Bhasin forward their point of view in this regard in the following way:

The material, symbolic, and political significance of the abduction of women was not lost either on the women themselves and their families, on their communities, or on leaders and governments. As a retaliatory measure, it was simultaneously as assertion of identity and a humiliation of the rival community through the appropriation of its women. When accompanied by forcible conversion and marriage it could be counted upon to outrage both family and community honor and religious sentiments. (“Her Body” 69)

Thus, in the victimization of women, not only the male of ‘other’ community but their own families were equally active. Women faced violence from their own families as well as their own communities. The danger of abduction, rape, conversion and forcible marriage of their female kin were mostly felt by the males of the communities. Any act of abduction, rape, conversion and forcible marriage meant a violation of community honor and purity, which, displaced onto the bodies of women, became the pretext for the killing of the women, whether that was suicide or the killings by their male kin. Butalia objects the notion of suicide and also presents the real cause of the suicide:

Did the suicides corroborate the ideology that the honour of the community lies in ‘protecting’ its women from the patriarchal violence of an alien community? The natural protectors by this reckoning are the men, who at this particular historical juncture, are unable to offer such protection. One can thus suggest that the women could well have consented to their own deaths, in order to preserve the honour of the community. [...] the ‘decision’ must have been one they felt

‘compelled’ to make because of the particular circumstances of the situation. (“Community” 42)

When women were forcibly abducted, sold, raped or remarried, they suffered unimaginable cruelty and humiliation. Women were sold or given away as gifts to the police, national guards, local *goondas* and others, as Basu remarks, "in the same way that baskets of oranges are sold or given as gifts" (272). Along with the rape and abduction, women's bodies were further tortured and wounded by the men of other culture. Addressing the violence on women, Urvashi Butalia says, "the violence that accompanied partition marked women and women's bodies in particular ways: we know of the rape and abduction that happened on a mass scale, of the cutting off of women's breasts, the tattooing of their bodies" ("Abducted" 91). Not only this, parading naked in front of the *goondas* (thugs), killing after rape, making them pregnant, mass rape, selling and buying them as "Commodities" were the other violations done to them. For an abducted woman, there was nobody she could turn to for help. She had to live with a man who might have killed her husband, brother or father, but she had no option. The necessity of rescuing these helpless women from the clutches of the abductors was felt by the people of both of the Governments of India and Pakistan.

On 3 September, 1947 leaders and representatives of the governments of India and Pakistan met and resolved the steps to be taken to recover and restore abducted persons. On 17 November, 1947 the All India Congress Committee passed a resolution which stated:

During these disorders, large numbers of women have been abducted on either side and there have been forcible conversions on a large scale. No civilized people can recognize such conversions and there is

nothing more heinous than the abduction of women. Every effort must be made to restore women to their original homes with the co-operation of the government's concerned. (qtd. in Menon and Bhasin, "Abducted" 6-7)

On 6 December 1947, an Inter-Dominion Conference was held in Lahore at which the two countries agreed upon the steps to be taken for the implementation of recovery and restoration, with the appointment of Mridula Sarabhai as chief social worker. Menon and Bhasin comment, in their article "Her Body and Her Being: Of Widows and Abducted Women in Post-Partition India", that the Abducted Persons (Recovery and Restoration) Bill presented by Gopaldaswami Ayyangar defines the abducted person as missing members of naturalized communities of families or religious groups, never as citizens:

‘Abducted person’ means a male child under the age of sixteen years or a female of whatever age who is, or immediately before the 1st day of March, 1947, was, a Muslim and who, on or after that day and before the 1st day of January, 1949, had become separated from his or her family and is found to be living with or under the control of any other individual or family, and in the latter case includes a child born to any such female after the said date. (qtd. in Menon and Bhasin, "Abducted" 8).

Though the Governments of India and Pakistan launched a project to recover all the abducted persons, Urvashi Butalia comments abduction as a "catchall" description which was brought to be used for all women and children who disappeared during the confusion of partition ("Abducted" 92). Further, she argues that "while it is true that many were actually abducted, it is equally possible that some

may have gone of their own accord. None the less, the two countries treated women missing or living with men of other religion after a particular time as 'abducted' women" ("Abducted" 92).

The recovery of the abducted women operations were begun with a genuine humanitarian motive of rescuing women who had been forcibly abducted-Hindu, Sikh, or Muslim. "The key officers charged with the responsibility of rescuing abducted women were themselves women: Mridula Sarabhai was put in overall charge of the operation and assisting her were Rameshwari Nehru, Sushila Nayyar, Prem Vati Thapar, Bhag Mehta, Kamalaben Patel, Damyanti Sahgal and others" (Butalia, "Community" 47). Mridula Sarabhai took this responsibility of restoring these abducted women keeping in view that recovery was "an effort to remove from the lives of thousands of innocent women the misery that is their lot today and to restore them to their legitimate environment where they can spend the rest of their lives with *izzat* (honour)" (qtd. in Menon and Bhasin, "Abducted" 11).

Bringing women out of a hostile environment was not an easy job. It was difficult to trace the woman's whereabouts. It was also felt that women were better placed to handle the delicacy of the situation and to persuade those who are reluctant to give up their new homes to return to the parental-national fold. Thus a number of women were drawn into the campaign in Mridula Sarabhai's leadership to handle the situation.

The situation of abduction, missing of people, children and women left out in the violence, displacement of people etc. were so much in number that it was difficult to decide who had been abducted and who had not. What if a woman had gone of her own free will? These were the things which needed thought, which needed consideration. So a date was fixed to decide whether the case was abduction or not.



Urvashi Butalia, in her book *The Other side of Silence*, blames that it was much simpler for an impersonal agency such as the State to set times, dates, figures to decide these thorny problems:

The violence in Punjab had begun early in March 1947. Thus after March 1, 1947 any woman who was seen to be living with, in the company of or in a relationship with a man of the other religion would be presumed to have been abducted, taken by force. After this date, all marriages or conversions that had taken place would be seen as forced, and would not be recognized by either of the two governments. No matter what the woman said, how much she protested, no matter that there was the odd 'real' relationship, the women had no choice in the matter. (Butalia, *The Other* 114-115)

There were many cases in both sides of the border that the people of one community secretly provided shelter for the missing women and children. Keeping these girls and children in their homes with humanitarian feelings was also prevailing at that period in both of the communities. But the Act of recovery operation treated all the cases equally. It could not differentiate the cruel abduction with the humanitarian act of providing shelter to the girls until the case is normalized. Also in some cases the girls of one community fled to their lovers of the other community. The recovery act and its definition considered these actions also as the act of abduction. The fixing of the date March 1, 1947 and considering every woman living with the other community as an 'abducted' one could not be considered as a fair judgement. Criticizing this fixing of the date, Butalia says, "many things were left unresolved by the fixing of this date: women who had children from mixed unions after the cut-off date were they also to be considered abducted women? Or did the date relate only to

those children who were conceived after March 1? The Act remained unclear to these issues" (*The Other* 115).

Not only the Act had incomplete and exclusive definition, the recovery process was also very much problematic. In many cases the abducted women themselves protested against the recovery. Butalia forwards some examples of women's reaction towards their recovery:

One abducted women is reported to have said to the District Liaison officer, Gujranwala: 'how can I believe that your military strength of two sepoys could safely take me across to India when a hundred sepoys had failed to protect us and our people who were massacred?' Another such statement was: 'I have lost my husband and have now gone in for another. You want me to go to India where I have got nobody and of course you do not expect me to change husbands each day'. Another said, 'But why are you so particular to take me to India? What is left in me now of religion or chastity?'. ("Abducted" 95)

Thus, recovery operation was difficult as the abductors tried their utmost to hide the abducted women on the one hand, and, on the other, the abducted women themselves did not wish to return because of the fear of another dislocation. The recovery operation lasted several years and during this time, as Butalia says, "women had perhaps 'settled' into families, some had 'accepted' their fate, some had had children and therefore many did not want to face a second dislocation" ("Abducted" 95). Most of the women were confused about what to do with their children. For Hindu families these children, born of Muslim fathers, would be living symbols of the pollution of the race and therefore difficult to be integrated into Hindu society.

Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru issued many appeals to treat recovered women as 'pure'. In one appeal, Gandhi said:

I hear women have this objection that the Hindus are not willing to accept back the recovered women because they say that they have become impure. I feel that this is a matter of great shame. These women are as pure as the girls who are sitting by my side. And if any one of those recovered women should come to me, then I will give them as much respect and honour as I accord to these young maidens. (qtd. in Menon and Bhasin, "Abducted" 17)

Like Gandhi, Nehru too issued a public appeal in January 1948, he said:

I am told that sometimes there is an unwillingness on the part of their relatives to accept those girls and women (who had been abducted) back in their homes. This is a most objectionable and wrong attitude to take and any social custom that supports this attitude must be condemned. These girls and women require our tender and loving care and their relatives should be proud to take them back and give them every help. (qtd. in Menon and Bhasin, "Abducted" 16-17)

Despite these appeals issued by Gandhi and Nehru that recovered women were to be treated as if they were sisters and were not 'polluted', when women did return, often families would not take them back. Families had filed complaints about missing relatives, particularly missing women, but between the filing, complaints and the actual recovery, months, sometimes years would pass. In the interim, as Butalia says, "the women would often have married, or become mothers, or simply settled in their new homes", then the problem was that the majority of the girls did not want to go

back ("Community" 50). The supposition of the family was that "the women were now 'soiled', they had lived with, married, borne children to the men of the other community, they had therefore 'diluted' the 'purity' of the community, how could they now be taken back?" (Butalia, "Community" 50).

Again, the most vulnerable position of the women was- what was to be done with the visible results of their impurity, their sexuality-their children? So for the women who had children, the situation was worse than that of other recovered women. Often they were forced to choose between their children and their families. Several women chose to give the children up and return to their natal families because of being unable to support children on their own. The experience of being abducted as Hindus, converted and married to Muslim, recovered as Hindus but forced to leave behind their children in Pakistan or vice-versa, made these women extremely insecure and unsure of their identities. Thus, these were numerous cases when women from both sides did not want to return. But they were restored against their wishes. Some of them protested for that sort of unwanted restoration. Some resorted to hunger strikes; others refused to change their clothes and so on.

Their strike was natural in the sense that after a couple of years, many of them settled down. They might be unknown about their natal families- whereabouts of them and unsure of their survival. Also some of them might have seen their husband's and parents' death with their own eyes, or their own families might have sacrificed them in order to provide safe landing to the other family members. In those circumstances, again uprooting from the settled home was really difficult and unpleasant for women. It is true that "in the early months and first year or two after partition, these women obviously, lived in fear and with the insecurities of adjustment to a new religion and

way of life, added to which were the memories of the harrowing experiences they had already gone through" (Basu 283).

But the wheel of time is the best healer of any sufferings and trauma. After few years of the partition, women consoled themselves with the destiny and accepted their fate. So it was natural for them to argue, protest and refuse in the case of bringing them down to camps from their newly formed homes. It was obvious to fear from another dislocation because it was not sure that the recovery team would certainly provide them a better settlement.

But the belief of the chief social worker Mridula Sarabhai was different. She believed that when a woman refused to leave her new home, it was out of fear. She also had the strong opinion that no woman can be happy with her abductor. The rescuers had to resort to all kinds of subterfuges to find abducted women. They had to play lots of tricks and acting to trace the abducted women. In some places the rescue team had to walk a long distance to reach the suspected village, leaving the vehicles far behind to avoid suspecting of the people. The police co-workers would be in civil dresses. In this regard, Butalia writes in her book *The Other Side of Silence* that the "imaginative social workers countered this in a variety of ways-by adopting disguises, using false names, acting secretly and on their own, or just storming their way into homes where they suspected abducted women were being held" (115). Disguising themselves as sellers of eggs and asking for lassi was mostly practiced by the women workers. The women social workers used to disguise themselves as saleswomen and enter into the houses boldly and request to buy the things they have brought. They often used to ask for lassi or water and used to make different fake but convincing stories to get information about the abducted girls.

It was so difficult to rescue the abducted women that if a woman was rescued, all the abducted women of the village were hidden. So, the recovery team decided to make many small groups of two or three and search in the suspected areas at once. They raided the houses mostly in evening time so that all the family members could be present and it would be easier to trace the abducted one. So, every effort was made by the recovery team to rescue the abducted person. One narration of a rescue operation goes like this:

We'd go selling eggs. We'd go into the villages, and we'd ask people for lassi, saying amma, amma, we have come from very far, please give us some lassi. So we'll sell eggs and ask for lassi. Then we'd tell stories, we'd say we have come from Hindustan and you know, my younger brother, these bastard Sikhs have taken his young wife away, they've abducted her. He is bereft, and lonely. Do you know of any daughter of kaffirs in this area-if there is any such girl do tell us, maybe we can buy her and the poor man, at least he can set up home again. And the old women would know and they would often tell us there's a girl in such and such place . . . (qtd. in Butalia, *The Other* 115-116).

So the rescue team worked hard to trace out and bring back the abducted women. Most of the abducted women rebelled against the recovery, but when they met their separated relatives, they were the world's happy people. Supporting the move of recovery operation, Smt. Durgabai said, ". . . is it not out of helplessness, there being no alternative, that the woman *consents or is forced to enter into that sort of alliance with a person who is no more than the murderer of her very husband, her very father or her brother? Can she be happy with that man? . . .* Is she not the victim of

everyday quarrels in that house?" (qtd. in Menon and Bhasin, "Abducted" 23). Smt. Durgabai presents her opinion in parliament supporting the action of the recovery team. She puts forward her opinion about the refusal of abducted women to return as the outcome of the social construct: "such a woman only welcomes an opportunity to get back to her own house . . . Sir, it may be that she has refused to go back. But on what grounds is this refusal based? On a fear complex, on the fear of social customs and . . . that her relatives may not take her back" (qtd. in Menon and Bhasin, "Abducted" 23-24).

Thus the social, religious and the familial construct of the then period was so much male-centered and male-dominated that, out of fear of being disregarded by their family members, society and religion, most of the women chose to remain with their abductors. In the same ground, one of the ministers of the Government of India of that time answered in the senate that ". . . there has been hardly any case where after these women were put in touch with their original fathers, mothers, brothers or husbands, any one of them has said she wanted to go back to her abductor" (qtd. in Menon and Bhasin, "Abducted" 24).

But, all the abovementioned actions and operations of the recovery team are seen differently through the feministic eyes. If we think deeply to the task of the recovery team and the voices of the Chief Social Worker Mridula Sarabhai and others, senators and even ministers of the government of India, we find a type of patriarchal notion in their voices. The process of recovery of the abducted women is entirely guided with the male-centered ideology of the treatment of women as their 'belongings', their 'commodities'. Urvashi Butalia very strongly presents her view on this type of male-centered notion of the people, she says:

Women who had been taken away by the ‘other’ community, had to be brought back to their ‘own’ community and their ‘own’ homeland – the concepts of belonging and otherness were of course defined for women by the men of the respective countries. They themselves did not have a choice. (“Community” 45)

Now, it becomes clear that the family, society and even the State treated women as their belongings and other’s belongings. Women’s interests and desires were never thought to be considered by the male-dominated authority. The women had been treated as a commodity, handed from one man to another to be used and abused. “The old Hindu concept of a married daughter being *paraya dhan* (another family’s wealth) is a succinct example of viewing women as commodities. The concept of women as independent human being with a right to choose their future was alien to traditionalists of both communities” (Basu 284). So, it is women who have to save the honor and purity of the family and society. This is the bitter truth of the womanhood – of being torn between the choices of living life somehow, anyhow, and that of dying in accordance with the rules of honor set by male society. Veena Das, in her one article, defines female body “as a space over which the competitive games of men are played that stands out in stark relief” (69).

Men are always the suppressors and the women have to tolerate everything. Not only the tortures and misbehaves of the other men during riots but the women have also to face the violence of their own men during the course of living. Das, again, shows the sensibility and nurturing behaviors of the women:

A woman hides the faults of her husband inside her womb, of how women defend the collective silences around the violence and brutality that they have to often face from their men. In the case of the partition,



women had to hide not only the aggression of men defined as enemies but also the betrayal by their own men. (72)

In their own families, women were in such a condition where they had to tolerate any kind of torture and misbehave of their male counterparts, what respect they would receive if they are returned to their homes after being abducted and raped by the men of other culture? It was the women who have to remain chaste to her husband after marriage and virgin before marriage. But that was not applied to the male. In this issue, Bharati Ray comments:

In fact, virginity before marriage and *pativratya* after marriage were not obligations for just the woman, they were obligations for the men of her family as well. On the chastity of the women depended the honour of the menfolk. In other words, women's bodies were the repositories of men's honour. Men had obligations to one another to hand over their women chaste while giving them away through marriage. It was as if a sort of contract existed between men to keep the women 'pure'. That was why a woman had to be guarded consecutively by her father, husband and son throughout her life. (6)

Within those obligations and restrictions, women were so much suppressed and dominated that they consider themselves the inferior creatures. In the process of recovery, the leader of the women who refused to return back to India said, "what happened to our relatives when we were abducted? Where were they? They now tell us they are eagerly waiting for us. No, you do not know our society. Life will be hell for us. You may do your worst, but remember this: you can kill us but we will not go" (qtd. in Basu 274). Women were living in such a fearful situation which was the outcome of the patriarchal domination.

The family, community, and the State are in the same position while obligating and restricting the women. Notions of honor for women as defined by the community and family often paralleled those defined by the State. For communities and families, as defined by Butalia, “the women were seen as taking upon themselves the task of preserving community and racial honour, and honour was understood as a function both of the mind – which is why the biggest danger was forcible conversion and the body, for after conversion would follow sexual congress with the male of the ‘other’ community” (“Community” 52). The forcible conversion of the religion of women was intolerable for the State because of which the recovery operation was started. Urvashi Butalia, very severely, comments on the Indian State’s view upon women, “as far as the Indian State was concerned, women were defined in terms of their religious identities, an unusual stance for a supposedly secular State to take” (“Community” 55). But the two major religions Hindu and Muslim have dominated women in various ways.

Hindu religion has a number of examples of domination over women regarding religious ideology or practices. Women have to take numbers of fasting in different rituals to pray for the long life of their husbands and brothers. There are different sculptures, pictures and descriptions of gods and goddesses where goddesses are seen inferior to gods. “The wife, who like Goddess Lakshmi worships her husband as if he is God Hari, will go to heaven after her death and will taste every happiness along with her husband just as God and Goddess, Hari and Lakshmi, enjoy eternal happiness” (qtd. in Ray 6-7). The patriarchy-based community was constructed in such a way that the idea of the modern, educated housewife was always tied to the older patriarchal imagination of the mythical divine figure of Lakshmi. That is the outcome of the Hindu religiosity which is centered to the male, putting the females in

the margins. Bharati Ray, again, comments on the patriarchal construct of the image of Goddess Lakshmi to dominate women:

Lakshmi is presented as a model Hindu wife united in complete harmony with her husband in a spirit that combined submission with loyalty. A truly good wife, it was said, would be so auspicious as to mark the eternal return of the cosmic principle embodied in the Goddess Lakshmi, the Goddess of domestic well-being, by whose grace the family, the extended family and the whole clan would live and prosper. (7)

Muslim religion treats women more cruelly than Hindu. Muslim religion has discriminated women as if they are even not the human beings. Men have the right to go to the mosque, and pray, but the women are not even allowed to stand up in the mosque. Butalia describes the Muslim's reaction towards women if they happen to visit mosque and the Muslim ideology for women's restrictions. She writes:

The moment they (the male-Muslims) see young women, their eyes become full of blood: run away, they tell them, go off. What are you doing here ... the culprit is within themselves, but it is the women they make run away: if they come into the *masjid* the whole *namaz* is ruined. If they listen to the last call of the month of *ramzan*, everyone's attention is distracted ... if they go into a *quawali*, the Sufis will turn their attention from god to the world. ("Community" 58)

That's why; both of the religions are discriminating women. They are treating women as slaves whose sole duty is to serve the male and keep themselves busy in household works. Also, they have to be chaste and keep their honor at any cost. A woman's chastity or virginity is important than her life. The male members of the

family, community and also the State saw women as a commodity, having no personal interest and desires. At the cost of restoring the women from the abduction, women were recognized only in the name of religion. For the State, the rescue operations were premised on the assumption that women of a particular religion should be restored into the fold of that religion. In the same ground of the State's treatment to the women, Menon and Bhasin argue that the State treated women only as missing members of the particular religion rather than missing citizens:

The process of recovery, of putting abducted women back into place, was not conceived by the State as a relationship to women as *missing citizens* of the new State (if so, it would have endowed them with civil rights). Rather, it chose to treat them as *missing members of religious and cultural communities*, on whose behalf choices had to be made.

(“Her Body” 78)

The intention of the State or the Indian Government in restoring the abducted women was fully dominated with patriarchal dogma. The religious doctrine of ‘bringing the women of our religion to our fold’ was the major issue of recovery operation. Questioning on the significance of the recovery operation launched by the Indian Government after the long period of abduction, Menon and Bhasin remark, “why then was the Indian government so anxious to reclaim women, sometimes several years after their abduction? Why should the matter of national honor have been so closely bound up with the bodies of women, and with children born of ‘wrong’ unions? (“Her Body” 75).

The forcible recovery of the abducted women was criticized by many people considering it as violating the constitutional and fundamental rights of abducted women as citizens. Not only had the outsiders, the members of the recovery operation

too, commented in the continuation of the recovery operation. Mrs Rameshwori Nehru was the main person to comment being one of the members of the rescue operation. Then, recoveries were more or less abandoned in 1959/60, when chief of the recovery operation Mridula Sharabhai resigned from her post after getting lots of comments. The abducted women themselves resisted to be recovered in many places. Menon and Bhasin see this act of resistance by the victims themselves as the growing realization of the domination of male towards them. They write:

. . . the resistance by abducted women themselves further demonstrates their attempts to realize citizenship by acting independently and autonomously – of community, state *and* family. The attempt was thwarted through a consensus reached by all three on the desirability and necessity of women preserving community and national honor by subordinating their rights as individuals and citizens to the rights of the community and the will of the state. (“Her Body” 77)

Many critics have several comments on the functioning of the state. Especially the feminist writers’ point of view is that the state still has the old and traditional patriarchal ideology. Bharati Ray writes that “the tediously old and glaringly biased patriarchal ideology and practices still continue. And the State is deeply implicated in their perpetuation. Plans and proposals of the alleviation of poverty and the empowerment of women continue to be churned out” (16-17). With that sort of biasness prevailing in the minds of the people who handle the country, how can women get peace and security, honor and opportunity in comparison to men? Bharati Ray again forwards her opinion in the issue of the State’s deaf ears towards women and says, “peace and security are concerns of both men and women, but women’s colossal problems, their particular sufferings, are hardly taken into account by the

male-dominated body that we call the State” (16). Women are dominated and constrained in a triangular shape by community, religion and state. In this regard Menon and Bhasin say, “for women, the state functions in interaction with at least two other major institutions – community and family – and that, together, they constitute the contesting arenas for gender issues” (“Her Body” 79). Paola Bacchetta, bringing the opinions of Menon and Bhasin about these three institutions, forwards his strong point about how the women and their bodies resemble in the patriarchal doctrine. Bacchetta quotes Menon and Bhasin’s point of view as:

. . . the violence was premised on the masculinist alignment of scales: female bodies were equated with notions of home, their respective religious ‘communities’, nations, and national territories. Thus geopoliticized, women were dualistically positioned as either ‘ours’ or ‘theirs’ and, accordingly, encoded as sites for masculinist protection or desecration. (571)

That type of masculinist concept of equating women with home and religion was objected mostly by the feminists. The geopoliticization of women by the male was also critically objected as the women were not the properties which men can distribute among them as ‘ours’ or ‘theirs’. Every violent and brutal act of the partition violence done to women, as noted by Menon and bhasin, treats “women’s bodies as territory to be conquered, claimed or marked by the assailant” (qtd. in Bacchetta 571). As Bacchetta remarks, “the symbolic meanings of these brutalities rely upon the gendering and sexualizing of intermale relations of domination and subordination” (572). This all happened and women were victimized in such a brutal way as a result of the “masculinist notions of ‘honor and shame’ which have been so

deeply internalized, in the context of gendered relations of power” (qtd. in Bacchetta 573).

That is why, the whole game of violence that came along with the partition of India in 1947 was the male’s creation. The familial construct, social formation and the structure of Government all had the same sort of masculinist ideology. In those circumstances, one is doomed to question on the existence and significance of ‘Democracy’. Bharati Ray says, “the term ‘democracy’ appeared to be a synonym for a male-dominated political system, and the new Indian state, sovereign and republic, a medium in the translation, communication and enforcement of patriarchal ideology” (16). Still today the practices continue and the state is still upholding the patriarchal codes and practices, withholding civil and political rights. Menon and Bhasin try to suggest the duties of the state in gender issues thus:

Women’s democratic rights as citizens are often held in suspension, as the current debate on a uniform civil code has shown, and is once more cast in communal terms. A reexamination of the relationship between gender, communities and the state, post-partition, may be useful in order to appreciate the process of identity formation, the complex nature of the state’s involvement in this process, and what it means for women. (“Her Body” 79)

The revisionist–feminist reformulations of partition violence as the above pages show expose patriarchy’s nexus with violence through a foregrounding of the subaltern female victims. Pooro, in Pritam’s *Pinjar*, is one such woman-protagonist-victim. The novel highlights humanistic concerns through the victimized, subalternist subjectivity of Pooro. The feminist humanism that she holds makes patriarchy’s inhumanity even more cruel and callous.

## Chapter – 3

### Pooro's Transformation in *Pinjar*

Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* has pre-partition setting of Panjab at the beginning and the locality falls in the part of Pakistan after the geographical division of India and Pakistan. The protagonist, Pooro, is fourteen years old girl at the time of their resettlement in their ancestral home in Chatto village after returning from Thailand. Pritam's protagonist Pooro's educational background is not given in the novel but she is presented as the most sincere and helpful character. Pooro is a beautiful and delicate pre-matured girl with growing adolescence in the beginning of the novel. Pooro has the great responsibility towards her family as she is the eldest child of her parents with one brother and three sisters succeeding her. Still "her mother was expecting her sixth child" (2).

The ritual of early marriage of the daughters of that time is the first issue of the Novel. The novel depicts the cultural and patriarchal domination to the women with the arrangement of Pooro's wedding in her early age of fourteen as her parents are "resolved to lighten themselves of the burden of a daughter" (2). Considering daughter as a burden is a religious and cultural construct which supposes daughter as *Paraya Dhan*, and consider it better enough to hand over as early as possible immediately after she has her "ritual bath" (2). This type of belief never lets the women to be equally treated in their parental home. Also, the traditional practices make women weak along with their physical weakness in comparison to men. "Pooro was not allowed to go out of her home by herself" (4). This indicates a type of familial restriction to the daughters, by which they cannot build up enough courage and confidence in them. The need of protection and support is always expected by the women who are brought up in such situations.



Pritam presents the Hindu rituals and practices of the period which are very much male-centric in themselves. Especially, the women themselves are willingly participating in those patriarchal practices. Pooro's mother's sixth child is expected to be a son and many holy chants are made to the Holy Mother, "who determined the sex of a new-born child", in the belief of the village folk (3). Praying to the God for a son is the major gender issue. Magnificently celebrating the birth of a boy and neglecting the birth of a girl is highly practiced in the community. The chorus– "Holy Mother, be cross when you come!, Holy Mother, be happy when you go!" is the religious discrimination towards women (3). Pooro's mother's lamentation before few days of her wedding also hints the discrimination between sons and daughters. Pooro's mother's song goes like this:

I have got out my spinning -wheel,  
 I have my wads of cotton,  
 I'll spin sheets with square patters,  
 To sons are given homes and palaces,  
 Daughters are exiled to foreign lands. (7)

Providing homes and properties to sons and sending daughters to other land are the examples of major domination towards the daughters. The social customs and rituals are shaped in favor of men where the women are subordinate creatures. Women can do nothing except singing such songs of plight and weeping on their fate. As the mother sings that song, Pooro runs up and clasps her mother and "mother and daughter burst into tears" (7).

Pritam very beautifully presents the every detail in her novel. She shows her protagonist, Pooro, as a vulnerable and sensitive girl on the one hand and Rashida as a

powerful young lad on the other. This type of presentation shows the masculinist point of view of considering a lady as a vulnerable creature. Rashida, the Muslim boy in his early twenties, is compared to a powerful animal that will easily capture Pooro and can do as he wishes:

Rashida was standing by the trunk of a tree staring at her. Pooro felt the blood drain from her legs.[...] Rashida looked like an enormous grizzly bear. Would he stretch out his arms and with his big claws draw her into an embrace? Would he caress her neck with his sharp nails? Would he drag her to his cave and . . .? (6)

The fear that Pooro has in her encounter with Rashida shows the helplessness of a girl who is brought up in the male-dominated community. The girl's imagination of a boy like a 'tiger' or a 'bear' and thinking herself as innocent and helpless as a 'lamb' is the product of the patriarchal domination towards them since their birth. Every sort of discrimination to daughters in comparison with sons compels them to think themselves as vulnerable creatures that cannot resist any man.

The protagonist Pooro is the victim of the religious enmity between her family "Sahukars" and a Muslim family "Shaikhs". The act of insulting the enemy by attacking their weak part is a type of strategy. But the way of considering the females as the repository to imprint the slogans of victory over the male-kin whom the women belong to is the mostly practiced act during the riots in India. It is also because both the Hindu and Muslim religions consider the chastity of the women as their religions' most honorable part. If the chastity of the women is ravished by the other cultural groups, it will be the great insult of the group that the victim women belong to.

The victimization of Pooro also has the same type of reasoning. The Muslim boy Rashida's kidnapping of Pooro is the revengeful act of the Shaikhs family towards Sahukars. Once, the daughter of Shaikhs was abducted by the uncle of Pooro and returned after three nights. At that time, the Muslims were in minorities in the village. But in the present context of the story, the Muslims are powerful than the Hindus so the police also take the side of Muslims and do not bother to find out Pooro. The innocent Pooro pays the debt of the sin of her fathers and grandfather that they have committed before her birth.

Rashida is presented as a deadly monster with "curled" lips and having "mischievous" smile in two previous encounters of them before her abduction (5). In order to escape from him, Pooro runs being "out of breath" and "terrified" in both the encounters. The vulnerable lady character of the novel has no other alternative than running to save herself from the powerful masculinity of Rashida. Rashida's eyes "glued on Pooro's still unformed breasts" show the masculine sense of dominance towards the subaltern female victim. Pooro is unknowingly abducted when she has gone out to fields to pick some vegetables in the evening. Pritam describes the scene of Pooro's abduction very dramatically:

From behind her came the sound of horse-hoofs in full gallop. Before she could get off the footpath she felt something hit her violently on her right shoulder. She reeled under the blow; she felt a human arm entwined about her waist and lift her into the air. She found herself lying across Rashida's saddle. (8)

The way of abduction reflects the strong physicality of man and the helplessness of woman as Pooro could not do anything to resist her from being abducted. "Pooro did

not know from where the horse had come, nor who was the man riding it; she did not know how far she had been carried." (8)

The poor girl is so much physically and mentally weak that after she is put on to the horse forcibly, she lost "consciousness" (8). When she comes to the consciousness, "she found herself lying on a charpoy in a room with the door shot. She banged her forehead against the walls and hammered the door with her bare hands till she fell exhausted" (8). This act shows her action against the masculine violence but she can do nothing by hammering the door with tiny bare hands. Pooro's dream in her unconscious state is full of fear and imagination. Again the state of being unconscious, after noticing that the abductor is Rashida, is also the outcome of fear because her two previous encounters with Rashida were very much frightful for Pooro. Pooro's imagination of herself being in a cave and comparing Rashida to a 'black bear' resembles the situation after abduction:

Pooro raised her fevered head. It was Rashida. She shrieked and fell back unconscious on her charpoy. She dreamed she was in a cave. A black bear was combing her hair with its claws. She shrank in size, while the bear grew bigger and bigger. The bear took her in its shaggy embrace . . . (8)

After few days of her abduction, Pooro knows about the cause of her abduction. She knows that her family (Sahukars) and Rashida's family (Shaikhs) have been at "loggerheads" for many generations (10). Rashida tells Pooro the cause of the enmity between two families:

Your grandfather had advanced us Rs. 500 on compound interest and taken a mortgage on our house. We could not redeem the mortgage. He

attached our house and had the entire Shaikh family ejected. [...] His agents used foul language towards our womenfolk and your uncle kept my father's sister in his house for three nights - with the knowledge of your grandfather! The Shaikhs were then like a bundle of sugarcane from which all the juice had been squeezed out. They wept bitter tears of blood and bided their time. (11)

The innocent and ignorant teen-ager girl finds herself in such circumstances which she had never imagined before. A sort of boldness emerges in her mind and heart. She questions Rashida- "if my uncle abducted your aunt, what fault was that of mine? You have reduced me to a homeless vagrant" (11). Not only that, she plans to escape from the place where Rashida has put her. Pritam, in her third person narrative, defines the act of abduction of Pooro by Rashida as the robbery of her birthright: "he had robbed her of her birthright; he had robbed her of her future" (12). Mental and physical strength in Pooro develops slowly and one night she escapes from the place when Rashida is fast asleep.

The vulnerable girl is now strong enough to make secret plans of her fleeing. A gradual maturity of the protagonist is developed. In the terrifying night, she becomes able to find the right way and reaches her home. After staying for fifteen days outside, how can her parents accept her? When Pooro feels her mother "take her in her arms and clasp her to her bosom, as a cry of anguish broke from her heart", Pooro hears the voice of her father (13):

'The neighbours will hear. There will be a crowd', warned her father.

Pooro's mother stuffed her mouth with the hem of her shirt.

'Daughter, this fate was ordained for you; we are helpless.' Pooro heard her father's voice. She clung to her mother. 'The Shaikhs will descend on us and destroy everything we have.'

'Take me to Thailand with you!' cried Pooro.

'Who will marry you now? You have lost your faith and your birthright. If we dare to help you, we will be wiped out without a trace of blood left behind to tell of our fate.'

'Then destroy me with your own hands.'

'Daughter, it were better if you had died at birth! If the Shaikhs find you here they will kill your father and your brothers. They will kill all of us.' said the mother, hardening her heart. (13-14)

She reaches her home and the lap of her parents with much difficulty escaping the abductor, but her parents, in spite of protecting her and supporting her, reject to accept her. All her hopes and desires of living fade away. Pooro realizes that there is nobody whom she can go for help. Pooro also remembers Ram Chand, her fiancé. A few questions suddenly strike her: "what about her fiancé, Ram Chand? What was the difference between being engaged and being married? Why had not he bothered to come to help her?" (14). Pooro reaches in such a condition where, "there was no hope for her; no escape except in death" (14).

The circumstances show a clear way to Pooro. She knows that her family no more exists for her. Her in-laws including her fiancé, Ram Chand, do not bother to help her. A sudden epiphany arises in her. She realizes that she is totally alone in the world and she wipes out her tears. She thinks that she has become totally orphan. Pooro comes to the conclusion that her life is not bound with any familial ties, she is

alone in this long journey of life. She can not decide whether she can be bold enough to live a lonely life in this world but she does not have any sort of fear with anything and anybody because she realizes that one can not do anything more than taking her life. And she has no fear with the death. Pritam describes the mental state and physical activities of Pooro after the realization of her existence and the disregarding of her by her parents in the following ways:

Pooro got up and went out of the door. Neither her mother nor her father tried to stop her. When she had come this way earlier, she had believed she was returning to life; she had wanted to live again, to be with her mother and father. She had come full of hope. Now she had no hope, nor any fear. What more could anyone take from her than life? The thought dried up all her tears. (14)

This is the main turning point in Pooro's life. A fifteen years old Hindu girl cannot imagine to be rejected by her parents, family, other relatives and in-laws. The fear of being neglected from the society makes her family compel to sacrifice their daughter. Pritam, on the other hand, gives a twist to the story when Rashida appears in front of her, few wards ahead. Rashida grabs her by the arm and she follows him without a word. "Even death had slammed the door in her face" (14).

The negation of her by her family, relatives and also by the community compels Pooro to stay with Rashida. Though being an abductor, Rashida treats her very softly. Here, Pritam shows love of Rashida to Pooro since their first encounter. Pooro finds herself totally alone when she hears that "her parents had left for Thailand" (14). Pooro becomes totally indifferent with the worldly things. She still cannot negate her past life. Pooro does not have any desire or choice. Rashida tells his plan of shifting to another village, Sakkar, to Pooro but "there was no reaction from

her after her parents had turned her away from their door, leaving the ancestral village did not seem so momentous. All said and done, what difference did it make? All villages were alike” (15). The sudden shock of her disregarding by her family and relatives has a great impact on Pooro. Pooro remains totally aloof from the worldly things. The period of transition between the incident and the development of enough maturity to tackle the situation is very hard to pass for Pooro. She stays with Rashida because she has no alternative except death. Where can a mid-teen-aged girl go when all her relatives and family turn their back to her? In her disturbed mentality and a type of epiphany “Pooro followed him [Rashida] as the blind follow a guide” without any reaction and objection to the next village (15). Among the Muslims in the village “Pooro felt like a stray calf in a strange herd of cows” (15).

First of all, Pooro is uprooted from her home, her family, then from society, community and also from the village, and when she is married to Rashida, she is uprooted from her religion too. A Muslim name ‘Hamida’ is tattooed on her right arm. "From that day 'Hamida' was not only inscribed in her skin in dark green letters but everyone began to call her by that name" (15). Actually, Pooro lives a double life after being tattooed ‘Hamida’ in her arm. ‘Hamida’ is tattooed both in her mind and heart along with the skin. Now, Pooro builds a certain feeling that she is neither Pooro nor Hamida. Pritam shows the feelings of secularism in her:

In her dreams, 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 neither one nor the other; she was just a skeleton, without a shape or a name. (15)



Now, Pooro negates her identity as Pooro or Hamida. She compares herself with a 'skeleton' which has neither a shape nor a name. Rejecting either to be Pooro or Hamida is a rejection of her religious identity. The religiosity of patriarchy treats her as a thing, which can forcibly inscribe their identity into her body. Hindu religion rejects her saying as 'polluted' by others i.e. Muslims. And Muslim religion inscribes 'Hamida' on her arm to show that a Hindu is converted to Muslim. Pooro detaches herself with these religious dogmatism, which are the main agents to ruin her life.

Pritam, slowly and gradually, makes her protagonist Pooro, a critic of the social, communal and religious structure of the period. Pooro is the mouthpiece of Pritam, and at the same time she is the victim of this patriarchal community and religion. Pooro is not an educated girl who is able enough to understand the domination of patriarchy in overall issues. Pooro only observes the issues in which she is directly involved. Her psychology and sentiments of a female and an immature girl are shown by Pritam side by side.

One morning, when Pooro sees peasants gathering in the fields and singing the songs of girls' praise, Pooro questions, "why were all the songs sung in praise of pretty girls? Why did not someone compose songs of lament for girls in her predicament? Why not hymns for those whom God has discarded?" (18). Pooro, thus, undergoes the depth of her sufferings and questions herself in order to get solace. But the deep-rooted religious mentality remains within her. When she gives birth to a son from Rashida, she does not accept the child easily. Her mind thinks it as an abnormal case, a child from a Muslim father is difficult to accept for the mother herself:

She felt her son's face nuzzling into her bare arm. A cold, clammy feeling ran through her body - as if a slimy slug was clambering over her. She clenched her teeth; she wanted to shake the slug off her arm,

flick it away from her side, draw it out as one draws out a thorn by taking its head between one's nails, pluck it out of her flesh like a tick or a leech and cast it away . . . (20-21)

The above mentioned words 'slimy slug', 'thorn', 'tick' and 'leech' show her hatred towards her recently born son. Such feelings emerge in Pooro because of the deep-rooted Hindu mentality towards Muslims. She cannot easily tolerate the fact that she gave birth to a child whose father is a Muslim. Again such feelings of hatred and uneasiness arise in her when her son is sucking her breast:

Hamida felt as if the boy was drawing the milk from her veins and was sucking it out with force, just as his father had used force to take her. All said and done, he was his father's son, his father's flesh and blood and shaped like him. He had been planted inside her by force, nourished inside her womb against her will – and was now sucking the milk from her breasts, whether she liked it or not. (21)

Thus, Pooro compares her newly born son with his father and thinks that both son and father are using force against her will. It shows Pritam's view of showing Patriarchy's nexus to dominate women. Pooro's feeling still goes further rebelliously towards the masculinity: "this boy . . . this boy's father . . . all mankind . . . all men . . . men who gnaw a woman's body like a dog gnawing a bone and like a dog eat it up" (21).

Now, Pritam's protagonist-victim, Pooro is totally mature to understand the masculinist domination towards women. Thus, being rejected from her family, community and religion, Pooro controls herself and becomes able to resist them in her own way. Through her own experiences and sufferings, she learns about the circumstances in which the girls and women are being victimized. Pooro, thus,

determines to help the victims like her in the course of her life. Despite the fact that she herself is a terrible victim, her humanistic concerns are a great satire to the existing patriarchy-based family, community and religion.

Pooro's love and humanism spread out when she sees a Hindu girl, "Kammo", who is not able to pick up her heavy pitcher in one dawn. A twelve-year-old girl, Kammo, is unfortunate to lose her mother in her early age. Kammo's father remarries and her step mother refuses to have anything to do with Kammo. Kammo is thus abandoned by her father as well. She stays with her aunt but with great torture and lots of heavy works. Through Kammo's circumstance, Pooro compares her own state of living without parents:

People often say that when a person's mother dies, even a real father becomes a stepfather. It was Hamida's ill luck that her real father had become a stepfather before becoming a widower, and her real mother had, without being a widow, become like a stepmother. (23)

The above quoted sentence 'real father becomes a stepfather when the mother dies' shows the male members' disregarding of their children after the death of their mother. The act of remarriage which is practiced only in the side of males is the main cause of the sufferings like that of Kammo. Pooro's love to Kammo still cannot cross the religious boundary:

But Hamida was a Muslim and Kammo was a Hindu. And even though she still thought of herself as Pooro. She knew that Kammo would not eat anything in her home. Hamida very much wanted to break pieces of bread and feed Kammo with her own hands; to hold the bowl of milk for the girl while she drank. (24)

But "only in the dim light of the early mornings did Hamida dare to help Kammo with her pitcher of water" and they start to behave like "mother and daughter" as well as like "two close friends" (25). Kammo makes all kinds of excuses to visit Pooro.

"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 helped her wash her hair and then oiled and plaited it" (25).

But the communal and religious deep-rooted dogmatism snatches Kammo from Pooro. Then "Taro", a lean and thin woman, comes in contact with Pooro. "The girl had been married two years earlier and had been ill since her wedding day. No one knew what it was that was eating into the girl; her skin had become the colour of a spring onion; her face yellow like a stick of turmeric" (26). The description shows the women's plight and sufferings who are the victims of the patriarchal practices of polygamy. The cause of "each time she [Taro] returned to her parents, she was thinner than before", is the negligence of her in her husband's home (26). Taro's own saying, "my husband has no use for me because another woman is mistress of both his heart and his house", shows her position in her house (27). Still she is unable to break the social construction. Taro's expressions that are full of rebellion towards the family and society are very strongly presented by Pritam which helps Pooro to develop herself into maturity. Taro's bitter expression – "when parents give away a daughter in marriage, they put a noose around her neck and hand the other end of the rope to the man of their choice" – shows the real situation of the marriage system of that time and women's helplessness and sufferings after being married (27). Pritam challenges God through the voices of Taro. The religious practices are bitterly satirized by the expressions of Taro. She says:

When a girl is given away in marriage, God deprives her of her tongue, so that she may not complain. [ . . . ] There is no justice in the world; nor any God. He [her husband] can do what he likes; there is no God to stop him. God's fetters were meant only for my feet. [ . . . ] if Allah was a witness of my wedding, then Allah perjured himself. I was never wed . . . never . . . (27-29)

Pooro is the observer of this type of marriage system and women's sufferings. Pooro wonders "how Taro, who could dare to say such things, was yet unable to break out of the perfidious institution of marriage" (29). Pooro, after hearing Taro's mother's utterances, feels extreme patriarchal domination towards women and helplessness of the daughter's parents when their daughter is married. Taro's mother explains, "once we give away a daughter our lips are sealed. It's up to her husband to treat her as he likes. It is a man's privilege" (28). The concept of 'man's privilege' towards their women is the extreme domination and control of men towards their female-kin.

Not only Pooro observes and sympathizes upon Taro's condition, Taro's strong verbal reaction towards the situation and the circumstances helps Pooro improve her thoughts and opinions towards the patriarchal domination to women. Again a character appears in Pooro's village, she is a madwoman. The woman is shown half naked, she "wore only a salwar, which covered her from waist to ankles; her belly and breast were bare" (30). Pritam presents the madwoman as the product of the society. She too might have been rejected by her family and relatives like Pooro. She might have suffered like Pooro and could not control the trauma and became mad. The pregnant state of that madwoman is a great satire to the devil nature of the male who always think women as the composition of flesh to fulfill their desire. The village women's grinding of their teeth in anger and saying, "he must be savage beast to put a

madwoman in this condition", is the women's attitude towards the devilish work of the male (31).

Pooro's humanistic concerns and motherly nature are again shown in the story when she adopts the madwoman's newly born son. The madwoman has already died during the labor of giving birth to her child. All the village women bless Pooro like "may Allah fill our home with plenty", "may your children live long years", "you have earned merit in the sight of Allah" etc. (33). Through Pooro's reaction towards the circumstances and about the madwoman's sufferings, Pritam shows the inhuman activities of the males and their carelessness in the results of their devilish acts:

What wretch could have lusted after the charred body of the madwoman? she asked herself. Did she consent to the act or was she raped? Did the man realize what he was perpetrating on a lunatic woman? Did he know what would happen to the seed he had planted in the vagrant's womb? The poor woman was not even aware of the fact that she was going to give birth to a boy. (33)

In this way, the misuse of the power of the males and Pooro's adaptation of the wretched things of the patriarchy go hand in hand in the novel. Pooro's struggle against the so called masculine religious construction does not stop here. After looking after the son of the madwoman for six months, the dominant Hindus of the village snatch the boy from Pooro's lap believing that the madwoman was Hindu and thus her son is a Hindu boy. Pooro can do nothing against the powerful will of the Hindu males of the village, only she can question herself about every upheaval she experiences:

Why had not the Hindus thought of taking the baby on the first day?  
 Why had they let her spend six months of sleepless nights? Why had  
 they let her swallow palmfuls 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? Why?  
 Why? Why? (37)

The Hindus could not look after the madwoman's son. After few days, they bring  
 back the child to Pooro whose condition was very bad. Pooro again accepts the boy  
 and nourishes him.

Pooro sometimes puts different queries to herself in her loneliness. She thinks  
 about her acts and performances that always challenge the social norms and practices.  
 "Hamida [or Pooro] thought of Kammo and then of the foundling. Why did she have  
 to pick up flowers which others had plucked and cast aside? What inner compulsion  
 made her water withered buds and try to revive them? (39). But she cannot help  
 herself without doing these all. It's her inner feelings and emotions that compel Pooro  
 to help the helpless people. Pooro's inner instinct and her own experiences of  
 suffering cannot see the plight of others; it urges her to help them as far as possible,  
 neglecting the social and religious practices. Pooro only listens to the voice of her  
 inner heart and acts accordingly.

Pooro is the observer and listener of different riots of the partition violence of  
 1947. "She heard wild stories of what was happening in the cities" (49). Pooro's ears  
 "burned with rage when she heard of the abduction of Hindu girls by Muslims and of  
 Muslim girls by Hindu" (50). Pooro shows her strong reaction towards abduction of  
 girls and other inhuman acts to them. "It was a sin to be alive in the world so full of  
 evil, thought Hamida. It was a crime to be born a girl" (51).

One evening, Pooro discovers a young girl hiding in their sugar-cane field, who "had been forced to spend the preceding nine nights with different men" (51). Pooro brings her home after it gets dark. The story of the girl makes Pooro furious. Her deep hatred towards the violence of males arises powerfully. She doubts and questions to the productivity of the earth after the occurring of such sins:

Hamida heard the tale with anger and shame. Could the earth soaked with human blood produce golden corn? Could maize remain fragrant if its roots were fed with stinking corpses? Would women whose sisters had been dishonoured bear sons for the despoilers? (51)

Pooro's understanding level, maturity and her actions full of heroism go hand in hand. Pooro secretly hides the girl in her home and later hands over the young girl to Ram Chand, her previous fiancé, in the convoy. She also gets another sorrowful information that her brother's wife or Ram Chand's sister disappears in the convoy. Pooro is very much concerned towards the plight and sufferings of the women who are the direct victims of the partition violence:

Hamida spent many nights staring at the beams of the roof. In her thoughts she wondered over the plight of the women – people's daughters, sisters and wives – who were forcibly held by strangers under roofs like hers. Amongst many such, one was Lajo, Ram Chand's sister and her own sister-in-law. (55)

Pooro's such feministic concern is very powerful throughout the novel because she herself crosses through the same type of trauma and sufferings that the victims of the partition receive. Her every step towards humanism is the great satire to the society which remains as a dumb eyewitness of these violence and inhuman treatments to the



women. Pritam foregrounds Pooro to satirize the social construction which treats the woman as servant of the man. Pritam shows how a victim of the social norms and orders can challenge them through her positive attitudes and patience. The love between Pooro and Rashida is also shown powerful. Through his strong feeling of love to Pooro, Rashida also becomes able to rebel against the evil sides of the communal and religious doctrine and helps Pooro in her actions. Recovery of Lajo, her sister-in-law, is the last and most strong and dangerous game that is played by Pooro against the religious enmity between Hindus and Muslims.

Pritam presents Pooro's activities while searching for Lajo just as the performances made by the members of the recovery operation of the abducted women in the partition violence after the agreement of Indian and Pakistani Governments to recover the abducted women. Pritam develops Pooro, in this stage, so bold and courageous that she plans to go to Ram Chand's village with sons and Rashida and plays her tricks to find out Lajo:

Hamida made her offering to the Holy One and then took a bundle of **khes** on her head to sell in the village. [ . . . ] During the day, when the men folk were at work in the fields and the women busy with their daily chores, Hamida would boldly enter their courtyards and dump her bundle on the floor. She would ask a big price for her wares and seldom strike a bargain. (56)

That is all done by Pooro to locate Ram Chand's house. Though Pooro negates the religious dogmatism prevailed at the time, she still has the faith on God. Also, she considers both Gods of Hindu and Muslim as the creators of her sorrows. On the day when she is going to meet Lajo, she prays all the saints, Gods and Goddesses. Pooro often says that "Allah was her step-father or she the step-daughter of Isvara, because

neither the one nor the other had given a fig for her sorrows" (58). Pooro, thus, finds herself between the two religions and she refuses to be any. Rejecting the certain boundaries of the religions, she uplifts herself in the position which is above all these patriarchal religious dogmatisms.

With Pooro's strong determination and Rashida's help, Lajo is rescued from the clutches of the Muslims. Rashida, being a Muslim himself, helps Pooro out of his love to her and his sense of humanity. Pritam shows the love of Rashida towards Pooro higher than his religious sentiments and family ties.

Pritam's novel, in its concluding part, shows its opposition towards the Government's program of rescue operation of the abducted women after several years of abduction. Pooro's brother says to her grabbing her arm that "this is your only chance . . .", but Pooro refuses to go back with him and prefers to stay with Rashida (73). Pooro is aware with the fact that:

. . . she had only to say that she was a Hindu and they would put her in the bus and take her back to her people. Like Lajo, like thousands of other women in the country, she too could . . . But she made her brother release her arm, turned back to where Rashida was standing and clasped her son to her bosom. (73)

Pooro chooses to stay back with Rashida because he has given her the love and shelter when she is disregarded by her own parents and family. The final decision of Pooro to stay back with Rashida is Pritam's own reaction towards the significance of recovery operation of the abducted women long after the partition of India.

Thus, through Pooro, Amrita Pritam presents lots of issues in her small novella *Pinjar*. Pooro's struggles since her teen-age and familial, social and religious thunder

that she bears are presented beautifully in the novel. Pooro, not only, pays the debt of her fathers' sinful act but also tries to regain the pride and blessings from her neighbors through her humanistic works. During her course of life in the novel, she tries her utmost to heal the wounds of the people which they receive from this patriarchy-based society. All of Pooro's actions towards humanism directly or indirectly challenge the so called social norms and practices. Pritam, very strategically, foregrounds her protagonist to satirize the male-dominated social construction through the activities of a subaltern female, who herself is the terrible victim of the familial, social and religious dogmatism of the then period.

Thus, Pooro separates herself from the prevailing social, communal and religious identities and ideologies. She tries to construct her different ideology and identity challenging the masculine domination towards the female. Pooro, at last, transforms herself from a subaltern female victim and negates the patriarchy's notions with the formation of her own ideology to act and view the circumstances.

## Chapter – 4

### Conclusion

Along with the familial, social, communal, religious and economic background of the period, the novel presents the terror and horror of the partition riots. Patriarchy's notion towards their women and women's consciousness of equality are very beautifully presented in the novel. Pritam's protagonist and mouthpiece Pooro observes every turmoil of the period since her early teen age to her late twenties. Pooro's physical maturity and psychological understanding go side by side. Pritam, very strategically, chooses Pooro as her protagonist who is the victim of the religious enmity of Hindu and Muslim, and the patriarchal dogmatism of the family and community. The humanistic concern of the protagonist despite her disregarding by her family and community is a great satire to the familial and communal construct of the period.

Pooro's humanism spreads from the beginning to the end of the novel. A helpless Hindu girl 'Kammo' receives love of a mother and friend from her, though for a short period. Pooro looks after and loves Kammo neglecting the religious boundary between Hindu and Muslims. 'Taro' is another woman with whom Pooro shares the plight of being born as a female. She consoles and gives company to Taro in her sorrowful days.

Adopting the infant of madwoman is another great humanistic act of Pooro. The madwoman is found dead after giving birth to the child. Not only she nourishes the orphan, but also challenges the dominant Hindu community through her love and devotedness. Once the Hindus seize the child from her believing the madwoman as Hindu but they return the child to Pooro who is seriously ill.

Bringing a Hindu girl who is the terrible partition victim into her home, hiding her secretly and handing her over to the Hindu convoy safely is Pooro's next example of sacrifice and devotedness towards helping the helpless victims. The Hindu girl is severely raped and molested and shifted from one hand to another for several days. Pooro finds her and puts her in her house secretly. This act of Pooro is her courageous step which is against her whole Muslim community.

Lastly, finding out the abducted Hindu girl 'Lajo' from the clutches of Muslims is the final and most dangerous attempt that Pooro makes. The tricks and actions she undergoes in finding Lajo are similar to the performance of the Government's Recovery Team of abducted women of the partition violence. Through Pooro's rejection of going with her brother leaving her husband, Pritam shows her own feministic reaction towards the consideration of male towards female as 'ours' or 'theirs'. The feministic reaction towards the uselessness of recovery of women after several years of abduction as the second dislocation of them is also shown by Amrita Pritam.

Along with her humanistic concerns and performances, Pooro challenges the prevailing patriarchy-based norms and practices of the society. After being rejected by her own parents and family, because of her abduction by a Muslim, Pooro refuses to have any type of identity – familial, social and religious. The act of inscribing 'Hamida', a Muslim name, in her arm adds fuel to her in rejecting the religions. She compares herself to 'skeleton' which has neither shape nor name. Pooro's state of aloofness and loneliness help her to develop into someone above than the normal people of the society. Her carelessness towards social norms and orders make her bold enough to act according to her wish and will. She finds the social, communal, religious and familial norms so coward and male-centered that she turns her deaf ears

to them and makes her own way towards love and humanity. She finds herself above than the prevailing social circumstances. She, in her mid-teen age, realizes that she has to live alone without her family and in-laws. Also, her society and community do not bother to help her in her hard days. The main cause of Pooro's ruin is the religion and its superstitious belief. Thus, she rejects to identify herself with any connection to these constructions. She constructs her identity herself with her loving nature and humanistic acts. She finds solace in her own tasks that are the outcomes of her will and heart. She neither tries to follow anyone's reasoning nor bothers to rethink in her acts. She puts herself beyond all the social boundaries and performs her duties that she herself finds suitable and right to perform.

In this way, on the one hand Pooro transforms herself to the sublime state of love and humanism through her acts, while on the other, she keeps herself from the circumstances of the general people by negating to follow any orders and practices of the community and religion. A subaltern female victim is healing the wounds of the other victims of the so called communalism. What can be the greater blow than this on the face of the powerful male-constructed society of the period? The acceptance and adaptation of the things that the society produces and discards is the main satire to it by the performances of Pooro.

The gradual realization of the patriarchy's domination towards women or the sense of feminism on Pooro is striking in the novel. An uneducated and subaltern girl realizes and understands the patriarchy's nexus towards considering women as the 'commodity' to be used and abused. The nexus of the patriarchy includes family, community, society, religion and also the state. The gradual physical development of Pooro and the circumstances she faces go hand in hand. The feministic concerns and humanistic acts she shows and performs are not so much powerful and radical but it is

a great step from a terrible victim of these social constructions. Controlling herself from the terrible shock and happenings and standing herself against the overall system of the society and religion is not a minor task for a girl who is being dominated since her birth. Again, performing lots of humanistic and courageous acts which almost go beyond the communal norms is an asset of Pooro. Negating any type of social traditions and transforming herself to somewhere higher than the general level is the striking aspect of the novel. Rejecting even the religious identity and searching a different identity with her performances full of love and caring to the helpless and discarded people is the central point of the novel.

Pooro, thus, transforms herself entirely towards love and humanism. She searches for her identity in her loving nature towards the helpless and victimized people. She puts herself above these familial, social, communal and religious ideologies. She finds solace and the state of relief in transcendence. She gets sublimity from her devotedness in humanistic concerns and loving nature. Her transformation makes her realize that she knows only one God, not the religions and believes in only one act that is humanism rather than other superstitious norms and values that the patriarchy-based family, community, society, religion and even the state are holding.

### **A Short Biography of Amrita Pritam**

Amrita Pritam is one of the most prominent female writers and poets of this era. She has published over seventy books- novels, short stories and poems. She has been elected a fellow of the Sahitya Akadme, in India, as one of the twenty-one immortals of literature. She has been honored with the Padma Vibhushan, the Jnanpith Award and the Padma Shree. She also received three D Lit degrees from Delhi, Jabalpur and Vishva Bharti Universities.

She was born in August 31, 1919 in a Sikh family in Gujranwala, presently in Pakistan, the only child of a school teacher and a poet. Her mother died when she was eleven and she was saddled with adult responsibilities early on. She began to write at an early age, and her first collection was published when she was only sixteen years old, the year she married an editor to whom she was engaged in early childhood.

She was very sad when some one million Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs were brutally killed in communal violence that followed the partition in 1947. She wrote extensively about that human dilemma. At the time of the partition she moved to New Delhi, where 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 following that her work became more explicitly feminist, drawing on her unhappy marriage in many of her stories and poems. A number of her works have been translated into English, including her autobiographical works *Black Rose* and *Revenue Stamp*.

Her novel, *Pinjar* (The Skeleton), about the agonies of Parturition riots, was turned into a famous movie by director Chandra Prakash Dwivedi. The French translation of this novel received the La Route des Indes Literary Prize in France, while its film adoption received the Screen and Zee Telefilms Award.

Amrita Pritam spent the final years of her life with a renowned artist, Imroz. She died on 31st October 2005 at the age of 86, after a long illness.



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