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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PARTITION: DEPICTION IN ICE CANDY MAN AND PINJAR

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ABSTRACT

Partition of India was the great historical event in 1947. Partition affected millions of people and changed the whole scenario of the sub-continent. Women were most affected in this era and were left desolate and deserted. Fathers killed their own daughters for the honour of their families or consigned them to the fire. Having been uprooted from their families and familiar surroundings they had to struggle to recover a sense of continuity in their lives. Crossing a border meant that they had to reconstruct their lives in new circumstances and in a new culture. The multiple forms of violence included inscribing tattoos on their bodies, parading them naked in sacred places and cutting their breasts off. Within patriarchal structures women are often considered as embodiment of the honor of the whole community. The above mentioned novels depict the real image of detested women in partition. The writers of both novels represent the series of female characters who have survived in the chaotic time of 1947. They project realistically the women's plight and exploitation in the patriarchal society and also explore how men establish their masculine power and fulfil their desire by assaulting women. These novels portray how identity of women changed in the midst of partition, how their actual identity was broken down and how they have to create a new identity which was mostly forced on them.

**Key words:** Female identity, Traditional role, Female suppression, Marginalisation, Patriarchal society.

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Partition of India was a great historical event in 1947. It was one of the most traumatic and disruptive event of twentieth century and created the serious communal conflicts that had long existed among the three main communities in Indian Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. The year 1947 is remembered for two events that occurred in India, first India gained independence and then the Independence brought the partition of India to create two newly independent nations India and Pakistan. The partition of India changed the whole geography and the scenario of the subcontinent. Partition has left unforgettable impact on people's life. Its deep, personal meanings and its profound sense of split, engendered, differences still lives in so many people's lives. Partition was not only a political device but it was a division of hearts. It brought untold suffering tragedy, trauma, pain and violence to communities who had lived together in some kind of social contract. It separated families across the border and made it impossible for the people to know if their parents, sisters, brothers or children

were alive or dead. Many people exchanged their homes and countries so quickly. Pandey explains the situation of that time:

“We live in a fragmented universe....We used to think whose children we were; now we are the children of no one & everyone! (Pandey 10)

The effect of partition was quite vulnerable to everyone especially women. Women were the worst affected through rape and abductions. They became central to the whole act of violence. The most predictable form of violence experienced by woman was when a woman of one community was sexually assaulted by the man of other community. Some 75,000 women were raped, kidnapped, abducted, forcibly impregnated by men of ‘other’ religion, thousands of families were split apart, homes burnt down and destroyed, villages abandoned. As Pandey explains that:

The women’s accounts are vivid and violence, the experience of abduction and widowhood, of rehabilitation and, sometimes, even liberation. The author explores what country, nation and religious identity mean for women and addresses the question of the nation, state, and the gendering of citizenship. Their analysis lays bare the multiple patriarchies of community, family and state as experienced by women in their transition to freedom and examines the deep complicities between them. (Pandey127)

On both sides of the newly created border women were kidnapped, abducted raped and brutally killed. Defilement of the woman’s body was considered to be the greatest dishonour for a family. Women in this communal violence became the most vulnerable and least protected victims. Some women were forcibly abducted, while others were left behind and lost in the confusion as their families ran for their lives. As Khushwant Singh describes in his book, *Train to Pakistan* “The fact is, both sides killed, both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both torture, both raped”. (Singh 9)

Fathers killed their own daughters for the honour of their families or consigned them to the fire. When women were forcibly abducted, sold, raped or remarried they suffered unimaginable cruelty and humiliation. Having been uprooted from their families and familiar surroundings they had to struggle to recover a sense of continuity in their lives. Crossing a border meant that they had to reconstruct their lives in new circumstances and in a new culture. In response to a question about whether there were any women left in ThoaKhalsa after the mass suicide of ninety women. BirBahadur Singh said:

Yes, many women still in our village. Mostly our family women died, and then the ones who jumped into the well. But others were saved. Because the Musalmaans saw that they were killing them. The ones who sacrificed....if the women of our family had not taken their own lives, the ones who were left alive, would not have been alive today. (qtd in *Other Side of Silence* 108)

The multiple forms of violence included inscribing tattoos on their bodies, parading them naked in sacred places and cutting their breasts off. Within patriarchal structures women are often considered as embodiment of the honour of the whole community. Accordingly in times of ethnic, religious or other violent conflict they become major targets. Rape has always been a potent weapon of war due to the humiliating nature of the sexual violence.

It was deemed acceptable for women to kill themselves or to be killed off by their relatives in order to escape being abducted or sexually exploited by men from the other community. Many families who had earlier reported their women missing now refused to take them back because they had been polluted through the sexual contact with men of other race. Violence against women is embedded in everyday relationship in this society particularly common in order to demoralize and defeat rival men in a patriarchal society is particularly common in Northern India. Abduction is also conspicuous in the history of inter clan rivalry in the Punjab. In the patriarchal society woman is the one who have been the victim of the brutal society.

The partition of India has been described by various authors and scholars in a very lucrative manner. Among them are two prominent writers, who have portrayed the true and the real representation of women in their writings, Bapsi Sidhwa from Pakistan and Amrita Pritam from India with their respective novels, *Ice Candy Man* and *Pinjar*. In these novels both writers represent the series of female characters who have survived in

the messy time of 1947. They projected realistically women's plight and exploitation in the patriarchal society and explored how men establish their masculine power and fulfil their desire by assaulting women.

### **Ice Candy Man**

Bapsi Sidhwa is widely recognized as one of the most prominent Pakistani novelist. *The Ice Candy Man* provides a unique perspective on India and Pakistani history, politics and culture. Her women are caught up in the historical events surrounding the geographical and social division or partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. She also deals with the issues like partition and exploitation of women and reaches to the conclusion that "Victory is celebrated on a woman's body; vengeance is taken on a woman's body.....that's very much the way things are, particularly in my part of the world" (Graeber 7)

The main purpose of her writing is to give voice to the silenced or marginalized group. Through the child narrator Lenny, She brings out her fictional autobiography. She has been a witness to the communal violence and anger in Lahore during 1947. She also deals with the problems of woman and theme of marriage.

The trauma of partition was seen in its execution, something that she brings out through Lenny. The creature of violence envisioned by Lenny emphasizes her awful reaction to violence. She witness the violence inflicted by Muslims also. She is afraid of tumbling of a two story building into "the exploding furnace" (136). Because of the communal violence Hindus and Muslims have become the enemies of each other. They were ready to kill each other for the sake of their religion and community as well. During the time of pre-partition to kill people and to burn the house and abduct a woman was very normal thing. And these things were happening at that time. Lenny's fear proves to be true when violence changes all the friendly atmosphere of Lahore. Ayah's friends do not gather in the garden. She shocked to listen to Ice candy man's account of the incident of the railway station. Ice candy man informs that the train for which he was waiting to receive his relatives has shocked him. He says: Everyone in it is dead, butchered, they are all Muslims. There are no young women among the dead! But only Two gunny bags full of women's breasts. (149) Reetu Menon describes the situation of women in the Partition era in addition to the mutilation of breasts, other common violations of the female form included "making the breaks and genitalia" with nationalist symbols, tattooing and mutilating pregnant bodies. (Menon 43)

In the novel *Ice Candy Man*, Lenny the child recognizes these social patterns and exhibits the vivacity and transcends them. She also records the multifaceted trauma women had faced during the unsettling and devastating day of partition. Each women character represents a way of life. Lenny her mother, her godmother, Shanta the Ayah is the major female voice in the novel. Women once they fall prey to men's violence like Lenny's Ayah, cannot hope for their restitution to their families.

In every situation women has been become the target of exploitation it can be for the sake of family, honour, community and country also. The worst victims of partition were women from both the Hindus and Muslims communities because women were the only weapon for one community to make another community more aggressive. It is a continuous process for the women because they have been exploited, and are still being exploited and they will be exploited in the patriarchal society, unless they will speak against this society.

In the *Ice Candy Man* almost every female character has been exploited socially, mentally, physically and at the end they doesn't know whether their family would accept them or not. In this novel Bapsi Sidhwa highlights the issues of present society and how the female has suffered in the Partition era and represents the extensive featuring of women's shared experiences of victimization in the communal riots, is complemented by a presentation of their oppression.

### **Pinjar**

Amrita Pritam is considered to be one of the most well-known female writers, a versatile talent who wrote poems, novels, short stories, essays, and biographies. She is best remembered her elegy on the partition of Punjab. Many describe her as the goddess of defiance, a rebel and a revolutionary who lived her life with utmost intensity. Partition is one of the India's most explored themes, more so the partition of Punjab. The rendering of the land of five rivers into two parts, solely because one had Muslim majority while the other had a Hindu one divided a people who were Sikh, Muslim and Hindu but who were also Punjabi with a mostly culture. *Pinjar* is based on Partition novel by Amrita Pritam, which is set in the post partition era. It is about the

sad position of women occupied in our society and continues to occupy today. Woman is the victim of a crime and she is the one who is blamed. She must pay the penalty so that the family's honour is not tainted. *Pinjar* is basically the story of Pooro who is kidnapped by a Muslim man Rashida in order to avenge a past calamity in a similar way.

Pooro goes through the mournful abduction process which is aggravated by the parental desert when her father refuses to accept her as he fears this act would lead to serve genocide. However Rashida is deeply in love with her and promises to keep her happy throughout his lifetime in spite of the fact that he forcefully married her. Later Pooro comes across a mad woman and a girl who had been sexually harassed and amidst the unfavourable circumstances. She does her best according to the need of the situation. ReenaMitra says about *Pinjar*:

Amrita Pritam in *Pinjar* foregrounds the gendered premises of traditional myths and the male-centered social and ethical codes of conflicts with need to be questioned and redefined in the context of the lives of the contemporary Indian women. In India gender has always been and still in large extent, a prescriptive factor in life which, in interaction with the ideologies of caste class and religion, circumstances for the social permissible range of experiences and determines their response to all that transpires. (Mitra 102)

Pooro's parents are seen to have a possessive character as they do everything that will retain the dignity of the family though it may be at the cost of their own family members in contrast to the charming character of her own daughter. Throughout the novel Amrita Pritam has nourished the character of Pooro as an essence of women power and significance. The writer through this story brings lights upon the problem faced by women during the time of partition of India. There were rites, rape cases, abduction of young women of opposite community. UrvashiButalia said in her book *The other side of silence: Women jumping into well to drown themselves so as to avoid rape or forced religious conversions, Fathers beheading own children so they would avoid the same dishonourable fate.* (Bhuthalia 5)

The women were used just as a symbol of sex for the pleasure of men. Amrita Pritam understood the sensitivity of the subject matter on which she wrote the novel and she has handled it with utmost respect. She describes the whole situation of that time. Women were victimized in different ways, many were widowed or lost their Children, and many were abducted and raped by other. The pre-partition communal passion and the related confused conditions presented and added advantage. Rashida a young man of the Shaikh clan had been chosen to be the instrument to the inerascable mark on the Shahukars. He was made to take an oath on the Koran that he would settle old scores by abducting Pooro before she was married. It was a classic case of love at first sight. In the novel he told:

Allah is my witness that on the very first day I cast my eyes on you, I fell in love with you. It was my love and prodding of the Shaikh Clan that made me do so. (8)

Amrita Pritam portrays in her novel *Pinjar* how the political decision of partitioning Punjab changes the equation of Hindu, Muslim relation in the arena. Before, the partition Hindu money lenders dominated the Muslim population of these villages but now in they fell helpless. The law and order situation deteriorates and a Muslim young man Rashida of Rattowal village, abducts Pooro when she had gone out in the fields to get vegetables. In the novel *Pinjar* Pooro argued with Rashida after her abduction:

Tell me, in the name of your Allah, Why did you do this to me?" She asked: He continued after a pause, "Did you know that our families the shaikhs and the Shahukarshas been at loggerheads for many generations? Your grandfather had advanced us Rs-500 on compound interest and taken our house as mortgage. We could not redeem the mortgage. He attacked the entire Shaikh family. (17)

This abduction and rape of the women of one community by the men of other community was a way of dishonouring the other community as a real symbolic subjugation. In these acts are also the notions of women as property. The novel *Pinjar* is basically the story of Pooro who is kidnapped by a Muslim man named Rashida. Amrita Pritam depicts the journey of Pooro and highlights the atrocities that she faces in her life through the partition era. From the very beginning she abducted and she goes to the parental desert when her

father refuses to accept her. Pooro's hope to live her life again was shattered as his father expressed his inability to take her back lest she would bring social disgrace to the family. He says:

Daughter this fate was ordained for you, we are helpless Her mother added, "Who will marry you now? You are defiled! Your religion is polluted. Daughter, it would have been better if you had died at birth. (28)

Amrita Pritam highlights that human had to constantly prove their innocence and assert their right to dignity in our patriarchal society. The other reason for not accepting the abducted women was the safety of the other members of the family. It points to the instances of men being bartered for the safety of the male members of the family during those harrowing days. Usually it was a daughter who scarified for their family. The reaction of Pooro's mother makes it clear when she says: Where will we keep you? Please go away at once, the Muslims will follow you. They will kill your father and brother (28).

This is the inexplicable plight of the abducted women very touchingly narrated. Amrita Pritam tries to highlight that women had to constantly prove their innocence and assert their right to dignity in our patriarchal society. Pooro's suffering spring from the long standing between Shaikhs and Sahukars but the male dominated society hardly takes cognizance of the misery and agony that are perpetuated in her life. It is through these encounters that Pooro grows into Hamida. In the novel there are many women who abducted, raped and exploited. The mad woman also impregnated through she was merely a limp of flesh with no mind to go with. Pooro says:

What sort of a man could have done this to her?" the women of sakkar asked each other they clenched their teeth in anger.....He must be a savage beast to put a mad woman in this condition. She is neither young nor attractive she is just a lump of flesh without a mind to with it...a living skeleton ....a lunatic skeleton...a Skeleton picked to its bones by kites and vultures , Thought Hamida.(47)

There are many heart rendering incidents in which young girls and women becomes victims for the hooligans. One day Pooro sees a band of dozen or more goondas pushing a young girl before them. She had not a stitch of clothing on her person. The goondas beat drums and danced about the naked girl. Hamida could not find out where they come from or where they were going" Hamida laments it was sin to be alive in a World so full of evil, It was a crime to be born a girl" (35).In the evening Pooro discovered a young girl hiding in their field. She understands that the girl comes from the refugee encampment in the neighboring village and was waiting her turn to be evacuated to India. The medium of the girl novelist narrates a tale of the camp:

The camp was guarded by Pakistani soldiers. After Sunset bands of goondas stole in, picked out women they liked and took them for the night; they were returned to the encampment in the morning. The girl has been forced to spend the preceding nine nights with Different men. (35)

Amrita Pritam highlights that the cases of molestation and rape of women were stray happiness. These happened not only during attacks on caravans of refugee camps protected by military guards. Pooro accepts her fate and lives with Rashida and even bears her son. Pooro makes efforts to send back her sister-in-law, lajo to her parents. Pooro regrets that she has not been accepted by her parents after her abduction, but helps lajo to join her family. She justifies lajo's recovery saying:

The abductions have taken place on such a large scale that the parents have started accepting their daughters abducted by the opposite community. Rashida says that the Muslim girls are also recovered from India. Such of the recovered girls are with the offspring's. (120)

Her final and ultimate reconciliation was with a different dimension. She symbolizes the face of adversities. She put a stone on her heart and takes a decision of living with her husband and son in Pakistan. She convinces her brother: "One lajo is welcomed, take it that Pooro also returned to you, my home is now in Pakistan" (49-50).In her transformation Skeleton turned Pooro can easily back to her home at that time when parents had been exhorted to receive back their daughters in the post-partition period. Throughout the novel, many qualities of women are brought out like courage and motivation to raise above all the problems and still strive for happiness in other's life are painted in the character of Pooro. It is emphasized that it is woman who plays for any failure in upholding family honour. The writer portrays the horrible picture of young ladies of opposite religion who were used as sexual object. She shows the emotions and happening through a journey

of self and political culprits. The novel is a testimony to the powerful narration of the typical social strands against weaker section of the society.

Partition has transformed the geographical, demographical, political, cultural, social and economic phase of these regions that have been commonly believed to be most affected by this event. Different literary texts respond to this fraught suppressed history. Partition violence has been represented in literature written in several languages such as Urdu, Punjabi and English. The writers like Saadat Hasan Manto, Attia Hosain, Bisham Sahni and Anita Desai are few examples of vernacular literary works that represents the brutality and savagery within which women were raped and people were killed during Partition. Among all these writers who have portrayed the furious conditions of partition Bapsi Sidhwa and Amrita Pritam contributes marvellously in the partition literature.

The novelists have intelligently reproduced the racial, religious, socio-economic and political biases which led to the historic bloodshed, plundering, defiling and disintegration of the society. Both the texts stand as a testimony to the powerful section of the society. The most important thing is that the novels focus is that when a social evil surpassed by the victim is on a sole basis it is difficult for the family members to accept the disrespect due to the social level. The novels are the touching experience as it unravels the ugly side of the hidden social evils and also the bitterness of the upheavals due to the communal disparities. Moreover the spine chilling description of the sufferings of the female flock in a male dominated society is worth appreciating.

Moreover, partition also becomes a parameter to study the dynamics of social change and gender perception. Both the writers see Partition as a male narrative by highlighting the indiscriminate violence on women sufferers and survivors. The sympathetic portrayal raped and abducted women characters like Shanta, Pooro, complicates our notion about home, patriarchy, state, community, human rights and history. Lenny's accumulation of female sexual awakening helps her articulate formerly suppressed voices with greater sensitivity. Both the novel's stories seen through the subaltern eyes seems to challenge such representations of nation and the female body by exposing the inadequacies and terrible consequences involved in national patriarchal agencies protecting their women. In partition literature, the example of woman as victim has been used as an important device in the depiction of violence against them. It also highlights the individual characteristics and experiences. Each woman character represents a way of life. This is the fact that women are always being marginalised and considered inferior over centuries.

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