

The Exploitation Of Women During Partition As Reflected In The Film Pinjar

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Abstract:

The partition of India destroyed the social harmony of the Indian subcontinent. Many writers portrayed the sufferings of the victims caught in the web of violence at that time. The aim of both literature and films is the same, to reflect life as it is. Amrita Pritam, an author of great repute wrote the famous novel Pinjar based on the theme of partition and cultural dislocation. The novel was later adapted into a film having the same name by Chandra Prakash Dwivedi. The film created a furor because of the realistic portrayal of the turbulent times of partition. It highlighted the agony of women victims of partition, especially the physical and mental humiliation they underwent. Women were subjected to physical assault, rape, forced change of religion, forced marriage to their abductors, life of drudgery as evident in the life of Pooro. Urmila Matondkar played the role of Pooro convincingly. Sandali Sinha essayed the role of Lajo. The teary-eyed Pooro, the guilt-driven Rashida managed to bring tears to the eyes of the viewers of this historic film. The film Pinjar by Dwivedi amassed many accolades. The movie was awarded as the Best Feature Film depicting the theme of national integration. This paper attempts to explore the loss of identity, sense of alienation and rootlessness as well as the lifeless existence of partition sufferers as shown in the film through the character of Pooro and Lajo. The present study highlights the theme of women's exploitation during Partition.

Keywords- *dislocation, rehabilitation, catastrophic, rootlessness, alienation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1947, the country got divided into two provinces i.e. India and Pakistan. Partition brought unforeseen misery into the lives of people. The event was aptly called catastrophic because of the tremendous damage it caused. The effects of the great calamity was brought forward by many writers and film makers. One such thought-provoking film was Pinjar made in 2003 by Dr Chandra Prakash Dwivedi. Pritam[1] wrote the original novel from which the film was adapted. The film Pinjar was appreciated all over the world because of superb performances by the lead stars.

Partition of 1947 brought havoc into the lives of countless people as it divided the Indian subcontinent into fragments. The Radcliffe line not only created an insurmountable barrier between India and Pakistan but led to the feelings of hatred on both sides. Perrier[2] said precisely in the opening lines of his editorial work, *From Fiction to Film*, "The study of literature casts light on the meanings in the film and the study of the film can illuminate the full value of the literature." The present study explores the women's perspective in the Partition ordeal. The purpose of the research work is to drive home the fact that women are

the main sufferers during wars, riots and partition of borders. The study is relevant in present times also as women continue to get exploited for gaining selfish motives like revenge. The research method adopted is descriptive analysis of the novel *Pinjar* and meticulous viewing of the movie *Pinjar* to understand the story well.

Review of literature- Amrita Pritam was a woman writer of great repute. She has carved her own special place in the field of partition literature because of her soul-stirring poetry and novels. Many researchers have studied the works of partition writers. Deepa[3] has studied the process of partition and dislocation in her thesis "Dismantled Nationalities: Transcending Memory", submitted to Goa University in 2018 shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in. Varma[4] studied the literature of modern and postmodern women writers in her paper "Facing Fundamentalism of Partition and Post-Partition Times: The Narration of Trauma by Women Writers (Amrita Pritam and Taslima Nasreen)" <https://www.researchgate.net>. The film *Pinjar* won lots of praises from all corners of the world. Rao[5] of *Glamsham* said that, "The music (Uttam Singh), the painstaking research (Muneesh Sappel) that has gone into the costumes and set designs is remarkable" <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinjar>. Mahesh[6] of *The Hindu* appreciated performances of the lead actors but criticised the slow speed of the film.

Text to Screen Adaptation- Many writers have penned soul-stirring stories to depict the devastation due to the partition. Amrita Pritam wrote the memorable novel *Pinjar* in Punjabi which was later translated into English by Khushwant Singh as '*The Skeleton and Other Stories*'. Noted director of Bollywood Chandraprakash Dwivedi created a film adaptation of the novel *Pinjar*. He won lots of accolades and recognition for the memorable film. His movie was awarded as the best film depicting the theme of national integration and received the Special Jury award for Manoj Bajpai as Best Actor. The film managed to strike a chord with the audience because of the power-packed performances by Urmila Matondkar as teary-eyed Pooro, Manoj Bajpai as guilt-driven Rashida, Priyanshu Chatterjee as the angry Trilok, Sandali Sinha as the victim of partition violence and Sanjay Suri as charismatic, large-hearted Ram Chandra. The main highlight of the film was that the original flavour of the novel was not lost during the film adaptation. On the contrary the beautiful direction, costumes and cinematography lent a panoramic view to the story. Soulful music by Uttam Singh and meaningful lyrics and dialogues by Gulzar and Amrita Pritam added to the impact.

Plot- The story of the film *Pinjar* is set in pre-partition times near Lahore of undivided India. Pooro, a young girl about to get married to Ram Chandra of nearby village Rattoval is cheerful, chirpy and full of life. But destiny has some other plans for her. A pall of gloom descends on her life when she is abducted by Muslim boy Rashida to avenge an old family enmity. Pooro is defiled by Rashida and later pushed into a forced marriage and change of religion. As bad luck continues to hover over her, she finds herself on the Pakistani side when the partition tragedy strikes in. Through the character of Pooro, the various pains of the ill-fated partition are reflected. Social disharmony, violence, cultural dislocation, migration affecting the victims of partition upheaval are reflected in the novel. Special emphasis is laid on the plight of women who are the worst sufferers. The characters Pooro and Lajo are molested and tortured during the ensuing violence. Even the madwoman of the village is not spared. She suffers the apathy of the male community. When Pooro discovers a newborn baby near the dead body of the mad woman, she is shocked.

Depiction of Sufferings of Women during Partition- Women had to undergo various forms of hardships and sufferings during partition like molestation, rape, abduction, forced marriage, change of religion, naked parade, slavery. The sufferings manifested in them in the form of lifelong trauma, identity crisis, loss of identity, alienation, isolation, depression. Their lives changed forever after the partition ordeal. Disintegration of families and dislocation altered the shape of the Indian subcontinent. Pooro, the victim of the violence had to live with her abductor in her new homeland Pakistan with a changed identity, her new name Hamida. This resulted in rootlessness and severe depression in her. She was reduced to a skeleton because of her grief. Rashida tried hard to please her and keep her happy but she continued to sulk and grieve. She could not gain weight during her pregnancy. She had a miscarriage after 4 months of pregnancy. Rashida felt helpless and guilty looking at her condition as he held himself responsible for all her pains.

Pooro's sister-in-law Lajo was abducted by goons during migration to India. She was held captive by her Muslim abductor. She led the life of a slave at his house. Her hardships ended when Rashida saved her by throwing his own life in danger. Rashida had a strong feeling that Lajo was abducted in her own village Rattowal. Pooro and Rashida made a plan. Pooro carried a bundle of khes (blankets) on her head to sell in Rattowal, her prying eyes searching for Lajo in each house. After umpteen, unsuccessful attempts she located Lajo by her tattoo. When night had befallen, Rashida took Lajo on horseback and broke into a fast gallop leaving the village behind. This act of saving Lajo's life had a cathartic effect on Rashida, as ever since he had lifted Pooro, the weight of guilt had hung like a stone on his conscience. He got rid of his past sins by saving Lajo. Bagchi [7] expressed his opinion about the colossal event of partition, "Partition played havoc with property and among the moveable property, the prime targets were women and children. Women were the special targets as they contained in their wombs possibilities of future generations (106)."

Repatriation of abducted women- Rehabilitation work started after the partition violence abated. Peeping into the official data during partition, the estimated number of abducted females ran into thousands. Restoration and repatriation of abducted women was declared after the violence. Rashida arranged for Lajo's restoration to her family. The climax of the movie Pinjar depicted the heart-rending scene of Pooro meeting her brother Trilok and fiancée Ram Chandra. Tears refused to stop coming out of her eyes. Lajo was accepted by Trilok on Pooro's insistence. Trilok tried to persuade Pooro to come with them to India as the last call was delivered for all Indian women. But Pooro refused to accompany them. As she turned back towards Rashida she was shocked to find him missing. She searched for him frantically thinking that he had deserted her, but just then she spotted him sitting in a corner crying his heart out.

Climax- The final scene of the movie highlights the feelings of love Pooro had developed for Rashida. Pooro refuses to leave for India at the call of Indian armymen. They embrace each other and bid goodbye to Trilok, Lajo and Ram Chandra. She declares that Pakistan is her home now and declares that any woman who would reach her home would also carry Pooro's soul. The film succeeds in portraying that love is superior to hatred and can dilute boundaries.

2. DISCUSSION-

Films are a reflection of the society. Many films based on the partition of 1947 like Earth, Gadar, GaramHawa brought overwhelming response from audiences all over the

subcontinent because people empathised with the plight of the movie characters. Ali [8] in the Preface of her book *Literary Adaptations from Page to Screen (A Study in Films)* stated, "Literature and films are art forms designed to empower each other owing to their own attributes.....Film is therefore a more direct sensory experience than reading- besides verbal language, there is also colour, movement, sound and visual images that stimulate our perceptions directly, while written words can do this indirectly."

The study attempts to peep into the psychology of women victims of Partition through a thorough understanding of the film Pinjar. It is clear from the examples of Pooro, Lajo and the madwoman that no woman was spared during Partition if caught in the whirlpool of unfavourable circumstances. The film Pinjar depicted the female character as the central one providing the much-needed gendered perspective. Malik [9] aptly highlighted this aspect of the need for female narratives in her book *Partition and Indian English Novelists* by stating, "Though women were very much apart of millions who witnessed Partition, they seldom figure as the 'subject' to male action (40)."

The film Pinjar was so convincing that the characters Pooro and Rashida stayed in the hearts of the viewers. The identity loss of Pooro and later developing a strong identity became a source of inspiration for many women. Gabbard [10] stated in his work *Psycho analysis and Films*, "Indeed films have become a storehouse for the psychological images of our time(3)."

3. CONCLUSION

The disastrous effects of the partition tragedy cast a gloomy spell for the victims. Their lives were altered by the cultural dislocation and loss of identity. The film Pinjar focuses on the growth of the female characters from submissive to strong, independent ladies. Pooro accepts her husband and leads a happy life after the uncomfortable adjustment period wears away. Pooro recoils to life because of her innate power to adjust to adverse circumstances. It can be concluded from this study that women were exploited most during Partition but they demonstrated resilience and bounced back to lead happy lives. There is ample scope for further research related to this topic to reduce the exploitation of women and for achieving true women empowerment.

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