


Thematic analysis elements of intersectionality in Amrita Pritam’s selective poems; today I invoke Warris shah, I will meet you yet again, and A virgin Sourath seelro

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Article Detail:	Abstract
<p>Received in revised form: 19 Aug 2023; Accepted: 25 Sep 2023; Available online: 04 Oct 2023</p> <p>©2023 The Author(s). Published by International Journal of English Language, Education and Literature Studies (IJEEL). This is an open access article under the CC BY license (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p>  <p>Keywords— <i>women Subjugation, societal pressure, misogyny.</i></p>	<p><i>This study tires to find the themes of intersectionality in Amrita Pritam’s poems, her poems are highly valuable in terms of gender roles, class, loss of identity, suppression of woman’s individuality and sexuality. There has been little to no work done on Pritam’s poems, nevertheless, this study will provide a unique lens through which we can imagine what she lived through. Her poetry is still relatable, and it is important to read her poetry through a feminist-oriented lens. In a world where man rules she shined more than ever, being a rebellious queen and an inspiration to many young girls. This study is textual analysis, its studied through thematic analysis.</i></p>

I. INTRODUCTION

Amrita Pritam (1919-2005) is known for many things some call her a goddess of defiance while other say she is a radical feminist but one thing that all agree on is that her poetry is phenomenal. She is considered to be the most prominent figure in feministic literature and has written in Punjabi and Hindi, her works are widely celebrated in Sub-continent especially in India and Pakistan and most of her works are translated in many languages such as in Urdu and English, her works inspired many women. She is a novelist, short story writer, autobiographical writer and a poet. Born in Gujranwala, what is now known as Pakistan, came to Delhi in 1947 as a refugee during

partition, she was an eye witness to violence like no other, the brutality of partition of India-Pakistan. She spent her life fearlessly and boldly, she never gave in to societal pressure, she stood for herself as her life had not been the most conventional one. She divorced her husband with whom she spent almost 25 years and went on a venture to do poetry reading around world. (Alexandra , 2018)

Amrita Pritam put forward the most confliction and controversial themes in her writing, she never shied away from her portrayal of female sexuality, she wrote about female subjugation and the constrain that society put on their freedom. Her first love was always writing, in an interview she said, “I started writing very early,

earlier than even fifteen, I was less than that.” (Pritam, 1968) She wrote out of loneliness as her mother died when she was only eleven and she had no siblings, writing in a way became her best friend at the early age and remained until the end. Pritam’s love life also played a significant part and inspired her writings, she was romantically involved with Sahir Ludhianvi, with whom she shared multiple love letters and was extremely in love with so much so that she used to collect the buds of cigarettes that he would smoke and she would smoke it when she remembered him, (Rasidie Ticket, 1976) later she was also in love with Imroz and married him, she wrote many pieces about him and said she found him late in life, she wrote, “In the times of love and longing-Amrita and Imroz in which she shared their story.

Amrita played a huge role in portrayal of a feministic point of view to the world, more significantly in India which was only a developing country at a time. She touched transactional far ahead of her time, such as, she talks about the societal restriction over womanhood in a world where patriarchy rules, she formed a realistic image of discrimination against women and a misogynist world view, the societal pressure, the shaping of ideologies, and traditional thinking of sacrifice that is only there in our society for women. She discusses controversial themes such as, Gender role, Class, Sexuality, and abuse. The four poems that are going to be discussed in this paper are; Ajj Aakhan Warrish Shah Nu (Today I Invoke Warris Shah), Mein Tainu Phir Milangi (I will meet you yet again), and Kumari (A virgin).

II. INFLUENCE OF AMRITA PRITAM

Amrita Pritam witnessed the most horrid event in human history, killing almost one million Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, her writings immortalized her and related with people. She was also responsible for starting a feministic perspective post-partition. She portrays strong women who live their lives on their terms and rebel against injustice, she emphasizes on education particularly as she was one herself and realizes importance of knowledge, she was not only voice of Punjab but voice of wisdom to all humanity. She is also known as Queen of

audacity. (Jonjua, 2016) Pritam is often said to Simone de Beauvoir of India and Pakistan, as we can see in many of her writing she insisted the femininity is socially constructed by patriarchal society to hold them back especially she focused on rural India, where women were defined by two terms only; marriage and children.

“One is not born a Woman” socially inflected constraints make an oppressed woman, so much so, that these women are so controlled and manipulated that they carry on these restrictions and pass on to their daughters (Joy, 2018). Her deep understanding of culture allows her to portray it an efficient way that touched many lives. She was one of the first woman to be awarded Punjab Rattan Award, Sahitya Akademi Award 1956, the Bhartiya Jnanpith Award, India’s highest literary award 1982 also in 2004, and Padma Shri Award and Padma Vibhushan in 1969. She was also awarded in Pakistan during her last days by Punjabi Academy, to which she referred “Maika”, she was sent chaddar from Warris Shah and Bolle Shah’s tomb as token of respect. (Wikipedia, n.d.)

Today I invoke Warris Shah (Ajj Akhan Warris Shah Nu):

This was written in 1949, in her poem collection called; I am historian of Hindh. Highly reproduced by many scholars in various languages. Pritam is calling Warris Shah who wrote Heer Ranjha, he wrote about daughter of Punjab and whole Punjab cried for her but now she is asking him to rise from grave to aid thousands of daughters of Punjab being raped, murdered and dismembered. About how many young ladies he will write a tragic love story but when will he write the real story, the horrific things were happening around. The context behind this poem is brutal and ruthless. Amrita Pritam was not delusional like other who reside in fantasy but a realist, she wrote about the real place of women in male dominated world, she showed us that the first opportunity that men will get, they will kill women, she tells the tale of sadistic society and about its owners.

This poem is a perfect example of gender roles, restricted social norms controlling women’s freedom and an expert critique over our society. She represents the radical manhood in our households just as in Warris Shah’s Heer Ranjha

her uncle poisoned her, perpetuated her to violence, our society is poisoning lives of many women, snatching away their right to live. She is also displaying her sleepless nights while travelling from Lahore to Delhi, she says she could smell the fear and hear the screams of victims. She wrote about these sensational topics to create awareness among women and the predicament of partition (Lobo, 2011). She lays a perfect scenery of what was happening, the bloodbath that took place, bodies spread across the fields instead of girls playing around there. She is referring to the core of Punjab the five rivers flowing as the name suggests "Pun" means five, Indus river, Jhelum river, Chenab river, Sutlej river and Beas river, and how it has become deadly because of poison mixed in by Britishers, the poison of hatred galore. She is imploring Warris shah that its time to turn the page as has changed since he has been gone, he needs to wake up now to write another tale.

Furthermore, she says the "land is fertile and sprouting" this can be metaphor for women of the rural India as they are fertile and giving birth also, but the fruit is not the legitimate one, this can be representator to the rapes of young girls and their lives being ruined. The skies are turning red from the blood that has been shed and the sheer gore and the cries coming from it, this can be connected to Khushwant Singh's novel Train to Pakistan, the humanity being killed. It turned the fresh air flowing, intoxicated. The famous bamboo flute by Ranjha taking the shape of snake that bites its charmer into one upon biting and everyone it encounters. She particularly referenced to limbs of Punjab as the daughters of Punjab as black and blue from pain, bruised and beaten. The cotton thread of respect is snapped now that hold Punjab together, where girls used to play in playgroups now they are running away and hiding, perfect metaphor for otherness for girls. "spinning wheel" refers to failed economy of rural areas, where newly wed couples are feeling away and not being able to celebrate their love.

She first creates the perfect picture of rural life and the disarrays it, the swings hanging on pipal tree than it being broken. Ranjha's brother refers to other boys; who have forgotten the real meaning of love instead taken the wrong definition of it perfectly captured in "Ice

Candyman, by Bapsi Sidhwa 1988". Blood is raining on the shrines of women fully drenched into it, first they made those huge standards for women and then disrespected them." Damsels of amour" means princess of love that is today sitting and crying on their door, lovers have turned into thieves of beauty and love, the real horror that men have created. She is suggesting that every man in today's societal perfection of man is, "Qaido" he is the uncle that poisoned Heer, killer of love. This represents the sadomasochistic nature of men. Today we cannot find another Warris shah to portray toxic masculinity, so she requests him give his commentary on this society from his grave as she seemed sure that even dead will be speechless to what has happened in the world. She asks him to turn the page of book of love now and start another story that is much more tragic.

I will meet you yet again (Mein tainu phir Milan gi):

The love poem she wrote for her partner Imroz while she was sick and bedded. It was published after her death and got much attention for its overwhelming emotional approach but its not only that, based on her real life, she talks about the enforcement of societal pressure and how we are forced to obey certain gender roles, not only women but men also. She was deeply influenced by her love for Sufism which then made her the contradictor of the political and social implications that were imposed on her. She was mainly in news for love affairs due to which she does changed many of her decisions, she did not get together with her partner Imroz because of societal pressure.

Pritam's poetry was had elements of Bhakti movement and the Sufi influence, which lead to social reforms for Medieval traditions of India. The superiority given to upper castes as brahman males and the exploitation of lower castes. she says in her 1968 interview, "the plain intolerance towards women". (Purakayastha) I will meet you yet again is the most remembered poem of Amrita Pritam where she shares a note of optimism to her lover that she will meet him yet again even if it has to be the figment of imagination of his, she will come. This also shows her rebellious and brave image towards as she said in one her interview, "she loves life too

much” she lived her life to the fullest despite being crushed by societal pressure.

Since Imroz was a painter, she says she will paint herself on his canvas, she will be the ray of sunshine for him and he will be the warmth that will shield her from cold society. It is also the reference to her death and her time to end but she says their love and her legacy is immortal. She gives an excellent metaphor to the perishable body and unperishable form of love, and she promise to meet her love of the life to meet him yet again, breaking the rules of hereafter yet again, where the societal rules and judgements will not be applicable to them both, we can see the element of Sufism and spirituality here due to which even after death she became a controversy with different religious group debating her place in hereafter.

A virgin (Kumari):

This poem deals with extremely controversial topic of virginity. In Hindu and Muslim communities, the concept of virgin is prominent, Amrita Pritam challenges this concept and questions it. The slaughter of innocence is shown in the poem. A comparison of married women and maiden, one virgin and “The other” this other can be defined by Edward Said’s orientalism (Said, 1978). The suppression of womanhood by men and how the certificate has been given to man the minute you are married to them, they are certified molesters. She asks why one’s sexuality is a such an important part of their identity, she says, it is forced upon women, it has nothing to do with birth and status.

She talks about the individuality of women hidden in darkness of night in the bed, she expresses her feeling of loss of identity, she feels like nobody around the husband. The narrator has progressive narrative and talks about desires openly, as a virgin she has been deprived of addressing her longings. It has been since forever considered as sin if a woman speaks out of her sexuality. In last lines she clearly states she had to kill one and she does not know who she killed, this can be symbolized with her spiritual death, the theme of gender roles is so evident in this poem and also biographic almost about Pritam’s love life and criticism she faced, being open about her relationships.

Gender politics plays an important part, she targets the traditional man-woman relationship and how one gender play a prominent part in society while other is dormant. The inherited right of men of having a virgin woman to flaunt around. There are so many cases where we see men killing their wives in the name of virginity and the vain religious scholars let it happen. The honor killings are one of the common practices in rural areas of India as well as Pakistan and they are common because man get away with them without any punishment. Our whole society is huge group of sadistic and masochists who feel threatened when women comes into power. She wrote a small poem on man where she pictures a perfect image of what are in her eyes; A quarter of Hitler, A quarter of Christ, A quarter of Manu and A quarter of Majnu, she is admitting the good in man but mostly they are Hitlers.

III. CONCLUSION

Amrita Pritam’s poems covers the whole era she lived in and the historic movements, firstly in “Today I invoke Warris shah” she painted the picture of brutality especially targeted towards women, partition is said to be one the most violent event in our history, the cruelty, hate and the dismemberment of humanity itself. Then in “I will meet you yet again” she expressed her feelings of being lost in the world and of separation from love and eternal longing for it, it also shows how powerless women is and how their happiness is always sacrificed in the name of class and financial status. And in “A virgin” she shared women’s place in society and how a woman is not a woman but label under virginity. This topic was a taboo in the society of that time and presently as well. Her bold and to the point attitude shocked many and stunned others. Its no doubt that Amrita Pritam is one the most renowned writers of sub-continent of all times. Her works are phenomenal and timeless.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This study only contained the thematic analysis and is limited in its resources. Since there has not been much work on her poetry, the future researchers can continue the study on her

writing style and on the power of using metaphors in her works. All her works are almost biographical so there can be more study on that as well.

The lack of original sources and translation this study was not carried on further, if researchers could find the translated books they can work on it for further research.

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