

NEW READINGS IN INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE ON **INDIA'S FREEDOM STRUGGLE**

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Preface

Literature plays a vital role in the execution of revolution. The great literary and artistic pieces have not only changed the minds of people but also prepared them for the contribution to the freedom struggle. The creative works of art having expression of agonies and atrocities inflicted by the colonizers upon the native people, of pure and ancient culture, of Indianness and patriotism help the Indians to build their notions of freedom. The writers become successful in the spreading of patriotic feelings and raising nationalist sentiments among the people. Indian English literature produced in pre and post-Independence era carries the narratives of freedom struggle movement. It traces India's extraordinary journey to attain freedom from the British rule. Freedom fighters and leaders who laid the foundation for an Independent India have been glorified in the literature. The different forms of Indian writing in English reflect the country's rich and varied culture. The freedom movement of India has generated a number of literary works which influenced the people to involve in the movement. These works have mobilised the mass by encouraging, giving ideas, new thinking towards liberated India and they have fuelled the freedom struggle. These imaginative minds have reflected their inner feelings, thoughts, and emotions in their literary works. They directly or indirectly helped the freedom fighters to have mass support by making awareness of freedom among the people. This attempt can explore the new readings of research scholars, academicians, and experts in Indian writing in English especially on India's freedom struggle. Indian freedom struggle has been a movement to promote sovereignty, unity, love, sacrifice, and respect towards the nation.

Indian English literature has been influenced by a number of factors, including the country's colonial history, the diversity of its languages, and the various cultural influences from other parts of the world. The result is a unique and dynamic body of work that covers a wide range of topics and styles. One of the most

Amrita Pritam's *The Skeleton*: Resistance to Slavery During Freedom Struggle

D. R. Mane

The prolonged struggle of Indian independence concluded with geographical division of India into twin nations called India and Pakistan. The period of India's division is called as partition often remembered not for offering freedom, recognition and liberty to India but for the plight, suffering and pain that the natives had to undergo. The freedom brought them nothing good but communal violence, departure of beloved people, ruthless slaughtering, riots, brutal massacre, rapes and all kinds of possible encroachment on humanity. The incident not only divided the country geographically but divided the soul of countrymen by destroying the religious and communal integrity.

Amrita Pritam's *The Skeleton* is a clear testimony to that fact the novelist dared to be different and didn't portray partition victims' only as pathetic creatures depending for male support or shedding tears and taking pity on their painful past but as true martyrs who underwent silent sacrifices. (Resilience,01)

Amrita Pritam's *The Skeleton* dwells around the plight of woman protagonist Puroo during the partition of India making her a part of this ruthless suffering, victimizing her individuality by all possible ways and means that too at the hands of culture and patriarchy. *The Skeleton* is identified as the best novel ever written by Amrita Pritam who is denoted as the first literary voice in Punjabi literature to explore on the plight of Indian women during the partition predicament. The novel reveals the theme of partition as it is set chronically in 1947 that artistically meets the darkest, the most turbulent and violent period in the history of India. The novel puts forth much communal violence, torment that a lady passes through, coupled with her struggle, communal violence, in-dormant rape, victimization, murder, etc. However, Amrita Pritam is impartial enough to portray the scene

of communal violence so fairly not being on one side either of India or Pakistan. Her mature narrative is celebrated literally by the natives of both the countries. Additionally, her tone of narration emerges with a human concern to denote the loss of humanity at large as the helpless people are subjected to surrender at hands of their unlucky fate.

Physical and Psychological Trauma

The female protagonist, Puroo, is shown to be a Hindu woman that travels through Muslim and Sikh religion as she is compelled to marry a Muslim man called Rashid. Her merciless destiny takes her through the pain and suffering of an abducted woman being uprooted, revenged and destroyed alike ruthlessly and is left alone by her fate. Undoubtedly, she receives nothing good from her fate, as she travels through the period of partition, her physical and psychological tormentation in given circumstances destroys her psychological integrity. Eventually, she loses her youthful dreams and gets ruined by Rashid, the male protagonist who is a Muslim guy. Initially, Rashid marries Puroo by abducting her forcibly, against her will and wish, just to take revenge on her family, but later falls truly in love with her, for her womanly qualities and sensible nature. Rashid in a due course of the story, emerges as her true lover but is rejected by Puroo who conceives and blames him for destroying her entire course of life.

Puroo, on the contrary, initially dreams to lead a happy married life with Ranchand a Hindu boy from a neighboring village. However, she falls a victim to the unfortunate fate and is subjected to communal disharmony, meets riots, destroys everything good in her life. She is left as good for nothing girl having treated inhumanly. In fact, the partition period was such a time where Hindu-Muslim relations were on the brink of death, destroyed everything good in it. *The Skeleton* is set against the time when Hindu, Sikh and Muslims were feeling insecure and intended to take revenge upon each other for all the wrong done to their respective communities. It was a difficult time for men and more importantly dangerous for women for they had to

protect their womanly goodness and modesty against the ill-intentions of opportunists by opponent religion. Many Indian women had lost their womanly modesty as they were being physically tortured, uprooted, killed and dishonored. Moreover, their physical torture had brought those worst experiences as being forcibly married, defamed and insulted. Many of them had lost their beloved and familial relations. Few of them managed to escape from the abduction, but their families had rejected to accept their return to home. They were being rejected as they had lost womanly modesty, inviting an insult to their familial esteem and pride, as the curse had fallen upon their family. They were subjected to the questions like who will accept them? Who will marry them? who will take their responsibility? and What is the use of them in family? Puroo's helplessness surrounds her entire life with darkness and offers her no hopes either that resembles with the millions of dispossessed and displaced women during the partition period as

Nobody realized that people would suffer so much – houses burnt down, neighbors killing each other, and women being abducted and raped... There was darkness all around. How could so many millions be dispossessed and displaced? (Bhaia, 07)

Indeed, these were ill-fated women like Puroo who suffered for no fault of her own. Puroo, the protagonist stands as emblematic to these ill-fated women who were subjected to their unfortunate destiny. Being abducted, violated physically, Puroo, at once, managed to find out her familial home, but her family especially her mother rejects to accept her home coming as it would bring nothing good to them more an insult and humiliation only. Even all the villagers conceive that if they accept Puroo in their family the entire Muslim community would take revenge upon them. Hence, Puroo gets no support, instead she finds all doors as closed to her. Eventually, Puroo is left with no choice but to return to Rashid helplessly. However, Rashid being fallen in love with Puroo, readily accepts and offers accommodation to her at his home.

On the contrary, Puroo successfully helps Lajjo to be free from the culture of a Muslim going that kidnaps her, that too with the help of Rashid only. *The Skeleton* proliferates the saga of the helplessness of a woman who undertakes a lifelong struggle for survival amidst the abnormal socio-cultural, socio-political and socio-religious circumstances. It is often seen as the tragedy of a woman being conflicted with loyalties. However, the humanity had witnessed its heavy loss of human values and societal ethics during the partition period. The loss of good life brings them only willingness for death. *The Skeleton*, therefore, symbolically and absurdly denotes the lifeless existence of merely dead bodies, a mere frame of bones without flesh, blood and life in it.

Resistance to Slavery: An Ultimate Flight

The Skeleton proliferates Puroo's resistance to prolonged slavery under the dominant British Rule transgressing the stereotype patriarchy. Here, the protagonist Puroo comes forward to defy the social, political, cultural, religious and economical oppression and simultaneously appears to be like a bird that cannot be caged or imprisoned within the bars. Puroo emerges as the strong, powerful woman who finds her strength through geographical, mental, physical and social partition and sacrifice. She falls as a victim to the wrongs - religious conflict, being abducted by a man who later falls in love with her. Rather, she prefers to stay back with her abductor husband during the recovery programme in 1947. She suffers through social stigma, asserts her individual autonomy by rejecting the so called confinements.

The Skeleton offers an internal pain and horror of partition days making Puroo as an epitome of violence against the inhumanity shown to a resurrected woman. It is an internal portrait of traumatic character who relates her entire life to the millions of ill-fated women whose pain remained unreported as they could not find a space on any literary forms either. Puroo meets the literary expression as Charlotte Bronte declares her female autonomy in the words, "I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I

am a free human being with an independent will." (Jane Eyre, *Weeb*)

Amrita Pritam portrays the realistic images of Indian women during the partition and freedom struggle in India. She succinctly projects how Indian girls, women were being abducted, faced rejection if they wanted return to their homes. Their physical torture, psychological humiliation and horror could offer them no escape from the clutches of slavery. Only choice they had that was a meek surrender that reflects

If we dare to help you, we will be wiped out without a trace of blood left behind to tell of our fate. 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. (Skeleton, 23)

Amrita Pritam puts forward the terror and internal suffocation in the mind of Indian women bestowed by the Indian partition struggle that surrounds their entire life making them fearless of anything. Indeed, their entire lives could take a drastic turn leading an identity less life; devoid of identity Puro does not kill her memories of family, friends and fiancé. On the contrary, keeps them intact in her subconscious mind and vented it only in her dreams.

It was a double life: Hamida by day, Puroo by night. In reality, she was neither one nor the other; she was just a skeleton, without a shape or a name. Why didn't Ramchand come for her? Did he not love her? What was difference between being engaged and being married? (Skeleton, 25)

Puroo's entire life story takes a drastic turn as she is born in a Hindu family, initially, enjoys the heavenly bliss of life. Gradually, she emerges as the darling child in the parental family; yet, her destiny takes her towards self-destruction as it has nothing best to offer her. She dreams a happy married life with Ramchand, and uncertainties of destiny as a helpless, powerless creature leaves her to suffer pangs of partition. Rashid abducts and married her without her will and wish as to take

revenge upon her family. In a gradual course, Puroo transforms from a Hindu girl to a Muslim wife having lost her individual identity, chastity and womanly dignity as well. Her body remains merely an object of sensual gratification, just to feed her stomach with tasteless food. She faces the music of double victimization, being abducted, violated physically and psychological disintegration caused by familial relations by rejection. This physical and psychological displacement takes her to turmoil, anguish as she retakes in life

...she had believed she was returning to life; she had wanted to live again, to be with her father and mother, she had come with full of hope. Now she had no hope, nor any fear. (Skeleton, 16)

Nothing helps her either and she intends to commit suicide. Her marriage remains as symbolic of her temporary dislocation transforming her from Puroo to Hamida losing her individual and parental autonomy, identity. It is the communal frenzy, riots and horror that destructs everything best in her life. She talks about the community as

We begin to discern some specific features of 'communal' crimes against women... women's sexuality symbolizes 'manhood'; its desecration is a matter of such shame and dishonor that it has to be avenged... It is women ultimately who are the most violently dealt with as a consequence. (Skeleton, 43)

Indeed, Puro once wanted to marry, lead a happy life, but not to a Muslim guy, hence, her marriage brings her nothing best than merely a social humiliation, insult and defaming to her family. Amrita Pritam's acerbic criticism over social and political dogma during the freedom struggle emerges with multiple layers of criticism intending social construction towards the betterment of society. Puro's pitiable condition in life is similar to the fate of millions of other Indian women during the freedom struggle. The partition of Indian sub-continent brings a disaster influencing the lives of innocent Indians. Puroo remains soulless, mindless and emotionless creature merely as an embodiment of the *skeleton*, to

lead a dry dreamless life. She turns from Puroo to Hamida sacrificing her every with to be a sensible woman. On the contrary, Rashid could witness a stream of goodness within her character and develops human kindness. Yet, Puroo rejects his good intentions blaming him to be instrumental to communal violence as

The streets ran with blood and were to be cluttered with human corpses, with no one to bury or cremate them, the stink from putrefying flesh hung in the air spreading pestilences. (*Skeleton*, 84)

Puroo's identity turns when Rashid forcibly converts her to Islam and marries her. Puroo turns to be Hamida. Hamida then comes in contact with three women; all of them are treated mercilessly. Pritam incorporates other supportive characters such as Taro, Kammo. Taro suffers with an unidentified disease and is left by her husband. She leads a life of a prostitute bearing to illness and disease. Her destiny shows no mercy to her as she demands death in the lines -

What can I tell you/ when a girl is given away in marriage, God deprives her of her tongue, so that she may not complain. For full two years, I had to sell my body for a cup of pottage and few rags. I am like a whore, a prostitute....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. (*Skeleton*, 38).

Kammo emerges as a motherless young girl, rejected by father. She had to face the deliberate exploitation as being forced for 'a naked parade' dehumanized, mutilated by all possible means, declaring the woman's birth as acrimie. However, the novelist recounts on the insecurity of women during the partition days as

There was a refugee camp in the adjoining village set up for the Hindus and Sikhs. The camp was guarded by the military. But daily the Muslims hooligans would come and take away young girls from the camp at night and bring them back the next morning. (*Skeleton*, 93).

This horrific scenario during the partition and freedom struggle projects the horror, traumatized conditions of an Indian women those were ill-fated, tortured, de-humanized and destroyed at the hands of communal frenzy. They remained merely as dead bodies, objects for gratification and demanded nothing.

An insightful interpretation of *The Skeleton* brings forth the pitiable, helpless and lifeless conditions of Indian women caused by the geographical partition of Indian and Pakistan on the basis of its religion and community. Indeed, millions of women were being ill-treated, exploited forcibly, de-humanized under the influential role of patriarchy from almost all Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities during the freedom struggle. Amrita Pritam's narration proliferates multiple layers of victimization and marginalization of women along with ruthless handling, ill-treatment causing them both physical and psychological torture at large. Amrita Pritam also reveals the violence at all possible levels ranging from domestic, communal, social, religious and national to worldwide exploitation that methodically encroaches women's womanly modesty and individual freedom at large. Menon declares the pathetic condition of Indian women during the freedom struggle as

Material, symbolic and political significance of abduction of women was not lost... on the women themselves...their communion or on... governments. As a retaliatory measure, it was simultaneously as an assertion of identity and humiliation of the rival community through the apparition of its women. (*Menon*, 3).

Puroo's individual struggle emblematically postulates all possible layers of brutal encroachment upon them via physical, sexual, psychological, communal and political violence, bloodshed leaving them mere bodily, dead existence having ruined by all dimensions. It is freedom that offers them nothing best than leaving them as mere deadly creatures, lifeless, bloodless and soulless. Freedom and geographical partition of India bestowed them nothing good than being the center of communal revenge, physical torture, sexual assaults, abduction, rapes, unwanted

pregnancies and simultaneous psychological fragmentation causing mutilation that overwhelmed their womanly sense and sensibilities under the suffocative environments. Amrita Priyam's portrayal of Puroo's struggle having astute knowledge and acute observation emerges with extra-textual realities those seem to be factual more than the real one.

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Rise of Nationalistic Fervour in Rabindranath Tagore's Novel Gora

Meera Murlidhar Nakade

Indo- Anglican literature abundantly presented the themes such as human struggle, inner conflict, liberty, spirituality, and freedom from clutches of imperial power, differentiation of caste, creed, race and religion and many more. Freedom gives feeling of building national and personal significance and self respect. Renaissance occurred in Indian writing in English with the writings and preaching of Henry Derozio. His Indian origin gave him heritage as freedom fighter that died early but kindled national feeling among Indians. His father was Portuguese and mother was English. Derozio was a teacher, revolutionary and tried to inculcate a large view among his pupils. He imparted that prime importance in life is to inculcate questioning attitude. He taught students French revolution and its dominance, English Romantic poet's imagination. He himself fired by it and the same communicated to his pupils. His revolutionary ideas are opposed by Christian people and compelled him to quit teaching profession. He raised voice against Christian Missionaries and western cultural domination. He was criticized severely.

This castigation on Hindu beliefs and customs were highly ridiculous that deteriorate society. Forward outlook of Derozio brought feeling of liberation among Indians. Hence he was punished by British and he turned to journalism for living. Missionaries and new Christian strived for a ceaseless war against Hinduism and mostly converted Hindu accepted Western life style as accepted. The Babu became anglicized in name, dress, manners and speech whole heartedly. This reality is presented as following the charm of west entices Indians. As S. Radhakrishnan quotes, "The Babus voice now became an echo, his life a quotation, his soul a brain, and his free spirit a slave to things." (p.14) This west impact on Indians is not only in Bombay but in Madras and Bengal also. High caste Hindus are