

Impact Factor: 8.67

ISSN:0976-8165



# THE CRITERION

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL IN ENGLISH

Bi-Monthly Peer-Reviewed eJournal

**16** YEARS OF OPEN ACCESS

**VOL. 16 ISSUE-1, FEBRUARY 2025**

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ISSN 2278-9529

**Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal**

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## **Silent Agonies: Understanding the Depth of Puro's Pain in *Pinjar***

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14973650>

**Article History:** Submitted-21/12/2024, Revised-10/01/2025, Accepted-09/02/2025, Published-28/02/2025.

### **Abstract:**

Amrita Pritam, the famous poet and writer of Punjabi Literature, penned the famous novel *Pinjar* in Punjabi. She was the most prolific writer of her age who contributed a lot of writings to Punjabi literature and won several awards. The proposed study attempts to investigate the insights into the personal costs of partition and the long-lasting trauma it inflicted upon generations. The paper also attempts to portray the injured body and soul of the women who suffered during partition. Amrita Pritam's novel *Pinjar* revolves around Puro, a young girl from a Hindu family. She has been living happily with her family when suddenly she is kidnapped by Rashid, a Muslim boy. Here starts her tragic journey. The present research paper aims at describing pains experienced by Puro at Physical, Emotional, mental and psychological level. In *Pinjar*, Amrita Pritam portrays the profound pain and sufferings of Puro, against the backdrop of the partition of India in 1947. Puro's anguish is both personal and collective as she endures the trauma of displacement, the loss of identity and the betrayal of those closest to her. Her pain is emotional, physical and Psychological as she is abducted forcibly and married to a man

whom she does not like. Puro's journey throughout is full of pain which she bears. She, like so many other women, remains silent and keeps on bearing all the wounds inflicted by life upon her.

**Keywords: Pain, Suffering, Partition, Women, Culture, Emotional, Trauma, Conflict, Personal, Upheaval.**

### **Introduction:**

Amrita Pritam, the first female writer of India was born in Pakistan in 1919. She has been a landmark in the Indian Literary scene. Since she is a worldwide recognized writer, her writings are available in various languages. A versatile genius, Amrita Pritam was equally at home in Poetry, prose and fiction. She started writing at an early age which resulted in her abundant contribution to Punjabi literature in the form of poems, Novels, Works in Prose, Short-stories and Autobiographies. She was the first woman to receive the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1956, 'Padma shri' in 1969 and 'Padma Vibhushan' in 2004. She was also awarded the Prestigious Bhartiya Jnanpith Award in 1982 for her book '*Lamia wattan and Kasthuri, Pinjar, Ahlana , Chakk No. Chhatti, Rasidi Ticket*'. The range of her literary career is quite vast. Amongst her outstanding works, her famous novel *Pinjar* can be specially mentioned which deals with the social background of a woman's suffering heightened by the partition and the dehumanized consequences it has. The novel first published in 1950, presents the picture of partition of India in 1947. It was a time of profound political and social upheaval. The central theme of the novel is the impact of partition on women. The novel revolves around the life of its protagonist, Puro, a young girl , caught between the violent turmoil caused by the partition and the complex emotional and cultural landscapes that define her identity. *Pinjar* is not only a story of

Puro but rather many women like her who were the victims of displacement, violence and marginalization during the traumatic period of partition. The novel delves into the complexities of relationships formed under such circumstances. It examines both victimhood and the resilience of human spirit in the face of overwhelming societal forces. Pritam's *Pinjar* captures the horror & trauma of individuals in the aftermath of partition. At the same time it addresses the broader human experience of survival, love and loss. *Pinjar* translated as *The Skeleton* in English is one of Amrita Pritam's highly acclaimed works. It is the novel that holds great significance in post partition literature. The central character of the novel, Puro is a young woman from a Hindu family in Punjab. Her life is going on smoothly when suddenly she is abducted by Rashid, a Muslim man, in the wake of communal riots and mass displacements that accompanied the partition. She endures intense physical, emotional, mental and psychological pain. Her experiences of abduction and survival reflect the multifaceted nature of human suffering. Below is an exploration of the various layers of pain Puro experiences throughout the novel:-

### **Physical Pain:**

In *Pinjar*; Puro experiences a significant amount of physical pain that symbolizes the broader anguish and trauma faced by individuals during the partition of India in 1947. Puro's physical pain reflects the brutal realities of displacement, violence and loss. The key aspect of Puro's physical pain is the result of her abduction and forced marriage to Rashid, a Muslim man, during the chaos of partition. Her body becomes a site of violence and suffering as she is torn away from her family and subjected to a life of forced submission. As the novel progresses, Puro experiences the physical discomfort of being in an unfamiliar environment, particularly at Rashid's home. It is not easy for her to bear physical relations with a man who has abducted her. Even though Rashid marries her, she never feels like a wife. The constant fear, harsh treatment and the emotional strain also

manifest in her physical pain. Although her physical pain is not always overtly described in the narrative, the suffering of being displaced, being treated as an outsider and physically vulnerable to the whims of others adds to the depth of her experience.

Her physical pain is also symbolic of more extensive disintegration of communities, identities and relationships due to the partition. The pain and trauma she endures make her body a silent witness to more immense historical and personal upheavals. Her suffering becomes a physical manifestation of more significant political and religious conflicts of partition. Her pain is also tied to the loss of her agency as she is removed forcibly from her family and her previous life. The physical injuries she sustains reflect the emotional scars she carries. As the novel progresses, her physical pain is a reminder of the violence and exploitation that she and many others experience as a result of the partition of India. In this way, Puro's physical pain symbolizes the broader suffering of women during partition, who became victims of sexual violence, abduction and forced marriages.

### **Emotional Pain:**

Puro's emotional trauma stems from the violence she witnesses and experiences. Her emotional pain is perhaps the most profound aspect of her suffering. She is torn from her family, her home and her community, causing a deep sense of loss and dislocation. Her emotional distress begins with the loss of her family, total disconnection from society and the forced adaptation to a new life. She has been separated from her family which makes her feel disconnected from her past life, her culture and the people she once loved. She has been forced to live in a new, unfamiliar environment where she struggles to maintain a sense of dignity and identity. Her emotional pain intensifies as she is stuck between conflicting loyalties— her loyalty towards the Hindu family and her growing sense of

responsibility towards Rashid and his family. One of the most profound aspects of her suffering is the loss of agency and identity. She is forced into a new life, where her past is erased. She feels as if she were a tool in political game. Moreover, Puro's internal conflict reveals the emotional toll of being uprooted as she is enforced to adapt to a new reality and face the horror of what has happened to her. This

work shows that Amrita Pritam was herself one of the onlookers of the partition of India. She has attempted to portray the falling standard of the human soul during partition through this novel. The novel presents the nerve-racking condition of women during partition. It is a narrative highlighting the passionate battles fought by women for their survival. The tale draws out the vast number of setbacks that a woman undergoes. Although Puro does not have a fault of hers but, because of family enmity, she has to bear the pain throughout her life. She is considered a vessel that the society can discard accordingly. That's why Puro gets rejection from her family, the people for whom she wept endlessly just on the ground that she had spent so many days with a stranger. She cannot be accepted socially. This rejection is also one of the causes of the emotional trauma of Puro. It is challenging for her to accept this rejection because she had thought that her family would understand her pain. But they were unable to see her pain, her struggle, instead they just consider their social position. The political and societal upheavals shatter Puro emotionally. She is wholly shaken when she comes back to Rashid the night she runs to meet her family. They send her back saying that they have no place for her. There is no kindness, love, or sympathy in the hardened social framework. There is no desire for recovery for the loss that Puro has faced.

she struggles with a sense of betrayal by her family as well as society Her internal conflict has been marked by the guilt of being unable to reconcile the part of her that wants to survive with the part of her that longs for a sense of normalcy and belonging.

The emotional isolation she experiences as a result of her abduction intensifies her mental agony as she has been caught in a situation where she can neither return to her past nor fully accept her present. Her emotional pain has been compounded by the constant grief of losing her family, her community and her former life. The violent separation from her loved ones and the loss of a peaceful, predictable life lead to an ongoing emotional ache. This grief, which she cannot express or share, accumulates in her mind, leaving her in a perpetual state of mourning for the life that has been lost.

Moreover, Puro is tormented emotionally by the societal judgment she faces as an abducted woman during partition. Her emotional turmoil has been compounded by the indifference of the world around her which sees her more as a criminal and not as a victim. Even her family sends her back because their social compulsions do not allow them to keep her. Their denial to accept her makes her feel as if she were a defiled woman and this stigmatization intensifies her emotional suffering. She has been caught in an unforgiving social environment that views her as a symbol of dishonour and disintegration. This rejection and her feeling of not being accepted by either community-Hindu or Muslim, further deepen her emotional suffering.

### **Mental Pain:**

One of the most harrowing aspects of Puro's mental pain is the complete loss of her identity. After the abduction, she has been stripped of her selfhood. She can not fit into either world; the past and the present. Puro's pain is visible in her internal conflict. She undergoes a battle with her inner thoughts and doubts. As she spends time with Rashid, she begins to grapple with a sense of guilt and emotional division. Her mind is in turmoil as she tries to understand what has happened to her and how she can regain a semblance of control over her life. She constantly questions her place in the world and struggles with

the guilt and shame of her situation. The cultural and societal barriers do not allow her to rejoin her family. She has been caught in a web of emotions, including guilt, shame and a longing for her family and her past life. In essence, Puro's mental pain is a combination of identity loss, constant fear, isolation, inner conflict and the overwhelming weight of survival. Her feeling of helplessness and powerlessness is the most painful aspect of her mental anguish. She can neither change her present nor join her past. The feeling of being at the mercy of forces beyond her control is a source of deep emotional torment. Living in constant fear of further violence and abuse adds to Puro's mental suffering. The trauma of being abducted, combined with the ongoing threat to her safety, creates a constant state of anxiety and dread. She becomes a metaphor for the thousands of women who had been caught in similar circumstances during the partition.

### **Psychological Pain:**

Puro's suffering also stems from intense psychological trauma of losing everything she once had--her home, her family, her community and above all her identity. Her loss is not only physical but existential. Her pain is not just about the physical violence but the existential crisis of losing her place in the world and reconciling her pre-partition self with the one that emerges from it.

The novel highlights the psychological toll that Puro's abduction takes on her. While she has been forcibly dragged into a life of captivity, her mind is constantly battling against the trauma of the violence she witnesses, the pain of loss and a sense of alienation. The experience of being kidnapped and forced into an unfamiliar world takes a profound toll on her sense of security and identity. The psychological scars of partition are evident in her constant struggle with fear, confusion and helplessness.

Puro encounters identity crisis when she has been named as Hamida. During



the day, she is Hamida but as the night falls, she goes back to her past where she was known as Puro. She has been reminded of her childhood. She misses the love and care of her parents and family. She thinks about Ram Chand. She has been lost in the memories of the past. While in the morning, she is again Hamida..This split in identity causes great pain in her. She is unable to get out of this crisis of identity loss. She questions herself about her identity and thus feels that she is neither Hamida nor Puro. She is just a Skelton -- a lifeless skeleton without any identity and even without life, only a frame of flesh and blood.

Ultimately, Puro's pain is about the search for identity and belonging in a world that has been violently dividing .Her journey is not just about physical survival but about finding her identity in a fractured world. The deep sense of dislocation traps her between her past life and the new life. She can no longer relate to the world she once knew and yet cannot fully embrace the world enforced upon her.

The psychological impact of this internal conflict is so powerful that Puro can not reconcile with her two selves. Her psychological pain has been linked with the societal expectations placed on her as a woman. She faces a dehumanizing stigma. The loss of agency and autonomy deeply affects her psyche. Furthermore, Puro's fluctuating relationship with Rashid adds to her psychological turmoil. She is torn between hatred and (initial feeling) affection (a later feeling) for Rashid, leading to a psychological struggle over her emotions.

As Puro has been caught between the worlds of her old life and her new one, she experiences profound existential isolation. She feels alienated from both her community which views her as tainted and from her captors who see her as an object. This sense of non belongingness, leads to an overwhelming state of loneliness and despair. Before her

abduction, she was a young woman with a family and community and a sense of belonging. However after being forcibly taken and thrust into a completely new environment, her sense of self is obliterated. She is no longer a daughter or a sister; she becomes an object of someone else's will. This loss of identity creates a deep internal crisis as she fights a battle to reconcile between the person she was and the person she has been forced to become. She has been torn between two worlds-- the one which has been shattered and the other which has been filled with loss and alienation. She is unable to fill the void and feels completely isolated, both physically and emotionally.. Her survival becomes a burden for her ;while others might see her as simply 'alive', the emotional and mental cost of her survival is enormous.

The psychological pain that Puro experiences is a reflection of the enduring psychological pain faced by countless women during the time of partition. Her struggle symbolizes the broader emotional and psychological trauma experienced by a million individuals during the partition who had their identities and lives violently uprooted. Ultimately, her psychological pain is a poignant portrayal of the deep scars left by communal violence and the loss of personal and cultural identity in the face of political and historical upheaval.

### **Conclusion:**

Puro's pain in *Pinjar* is multifaceted, encompassing physical, emotional, mental and psychological suffering. Her journey from a young, hopeful woman to someone marked by the trauma of partition reflects the broader experience of millions who endured similar fates during this period of History. Amrita Pritam's presentation of Puro's pain extends beyond her personal experiences. It aims at giving a larger feminist message. Through Puro, she highlights how women had been double victimized- first by violence of

partition and second by patriarchal structures that sought to silence them. Her suffering speaks of the deep injustices faced by women who had been caught in the crossfire of political conflict. Nevertheless within this pain lies a message of hope. Puro's eventual understanding of her worth and ability to survive again conveys a message of hopefulness amid unimaginable sorrow. Through Puro, Pritam captures both the personal and collective dimensions of pain, creating a poignant and powerful narrative about loss, identity, trauma, survival and search for meaning in a world broken by political and religious conflict. Through Puro's journey, Pritam highlights the deep emotional scars left by political and social violence. Her journey is a testimony to the pain of Partition, offering a humanized perspective on the historical tragedy..

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