

PARTITION: PLIGHT, TRAUMA AND CULTURAL DETERIORATION OF PUNJABI WOMEN IN THE WORKS OF AMRITA PRITAM, AJEET COUR AND KARTAR SINGH DUGGAL

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Abstract

The research explores the condition of women, culture of Punjab, colonial and post colonial aspects in the context of partition. The themes of gender discrimination, separation, communal riots, cultural deterioration, double marginalization, identity crises and function of power related to partition are studied theoretically. The writers from Punjab had closely experienced the partition and successfully gave the words to the suppression of women. The concept of rehabilitation of women is well portrayed in the work of Kartar Singh Duggal's *Abducted Not*. According to him the process of rehabilitation of women was no less than a trauma for them. It is seen as partition within the partition. Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* demonstrates the role of religion in the partition that largely impacted the psychological and sexual condition of women. The character of Puroo faced the cultural crises being the daughter of Hindu and wife of Muslim. Ajeet Cour's work *Weaving Water* represents the typical society of Punjab ruled by the patriarchal norms where the status of women is culturally deteriorated. The research analyzes the social and cultural role of women in Punjab because after the partition the values, beliefs and the way of life and ordinary habits that build the culture were completely shattered. The word 'culture' lacks the critical approach in defining the cultural deterioration and disturbances within the boundaries.

Keywords: partition, culture, trauma, women, gender.

INTRODUCTION

The prominent writers from the contemporary Punjabi Literature are Amrita Pritam, Kartar Singh Duggal, Dalip Kaur Tiwana, Ajeet Kaur, Nanak Singh, Ram Sarup Ankhil and Gurdial Singh. Amrita Pritam was the best known for her novel *Pinjar or The Skeleton* covered the feministic aspects considering the psychological, social and political condition of women during India-Pakistan partition. Kartar Singh Duggal is a sensitive and prolific Punjabi writer who has given a new approach and perspective for the study of social discrimination, alienation, trauma, oppression and subjugation faced by women in Punjab. The theme of partition is well exemplified in Kartar Singh Duggal's *Abducted Not*. Nanak Singh, father of Punjabi novels is a reformist focusing on social evils like dowry system, untouchability, hypocrisy in religion and prostitution. The primary source consists of Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar*, Kartar Singh Duggal's *Twice Born and Twice Dead* and Ajeet Cour's *Weaving Water*. The common themes that are discussed in the primary texts are partition, women subjugation, gender discrimination, culture deterioration and male dominance. Indian English Literature exemplifies the various works that constitute the theme of independence and partition such as Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* based on the fictional village Manu Majra, recollecting the events of partition from history targeting the social and religious structure. Manohar Malgonkar's *A bend in the Ganges* discusses the swadeshi movement, civil disobedience and partition riots in Punjab.

Bapsi Sidwa's Ice candy man revolves around the Parsee girl Lenny who acknowledged the truth of partition and sexual plight objectified the women as the tool of revenge. Among them some other works are *Tamas* by Bhisham Sahni and *Difficult Daughter* by Manu Kapur. Partition discussed the Hindu-Muslims riots, replacement, dislocation fragmentation, colonialism and post colonialism.

The feministic approach to the partition novels develops the theme of identity, disillusionment, historicity of women, suppression, cultural deterioration and double marginalization. The culture is critiqued as the discourse that emphasizes the theme of origin, customs, orthodox society, hybridization, ambivalence and mimicry. The role of power and mechanism of sexuality allow the readers to delineate the condition of women. The forced sexuality and clear acceptance of woman as 'other' deteriorated her socially and culturally. The deterioration of culture needs to be discussed in order to locate the identity of people who faced the partition. The partition of course impacted both the genders, men after the partition somehow managed to locate themselves but women lost the essence of life as their parents refused them on being raped or mutilated. The husbands did not accept their wives because they failed to save their virtue. The sexual assaults did not allow women to decide their fate. According to Raymond William the 'culture' can be defined in three categories. First, culture is about the process that leads to human perfection, absolute or universal value system. Second culture can be defined through documentary in which the meaning of culture is derived from the imaginative and intellectual work. The detailed study of human thought and experience allow us to record the events, values and certain habits that build the culture also the nature of experience, thoughts, convention and language define the culture. The third category defines the culture in social context. It constitutes definite way of life that expresses the certain values in art and learning. It also records the ordinary values that lead to historical criticism. The historical criticism compiles the three categories thus involved imaginative and intellectual works that are scrutinized in the particular societies and tradition. This historical criticism will be studied in the context of partition, physical and mental destruction women suffered. It also this provides the reader a platform to define the culture broadly discussed the India-Pakistan values and intellectual works before and after partition.

The post colonial study of the text can be analysed by Edward Said's concept of orientalism. According to him, the orientalism is almost the European invention. With certain facts about orient the Europeans induced lots of elements to structure orientalism of European version. Said raised the question how and why the orient was invented? European fantasize, reproduce and romanticize the term orient. Also they had never experienced the orient world so they created their own. This whole European experience or what they invented is known as orientalism. In order to conduct the successful research the concerned novels will be scrutinized considering the works of various theorists such as Gayatri Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak*, Homi K Bhabh's *The Location of Culture*, Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Michael Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, Simon De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Raymond William's *Culture and Society*, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It involves the research done by various other scholars who have explored the Punjabi Literature. The research paper 'Sikh Perspectives on Partition: A Study On Kartar Singh Duggal's

'Twice Born Twice Dead' by Dr S.N Mahalakshmi acknowledged about one of the most famous partition work *Twice Born Twice Dead* by Kartar Singh Duggal. The title of the novel signifies the trauma, holocaust and terrorism that not only killed thousands of lives but destroyed their history completely. The work raised the partition themes such as deterioration of history and culture, bloodshed, rape of women, Hindu- Muslim riots. Kartar Singh's work reminds the various other novels that denounce the theme of partition such as Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges*, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* or *Cracking India*.

The event of Partition is sensitively analysed by several of critics who bring forth Gandhian philosophy, struggle of Independence, colonial structure, post colonial themes and cultural dislocation. The grounds for orientalism are revived and enhanced the structure of orient and occident. India is never recognized as an independent country even after freedom because divide and rule scattered the mother land into different religions, cast and creed. After partition humanity lost its essence of life as amity, love, affections, emotions, relationships completely drained. Kartar Singh's work depicts the tragic saga set in the village named Rawalpindi Pakistan where Hindu-Muslim riots took place and then action shifts to India. The research analyzes the condition of refugees who are marginalized to the extent that they failed to locate themselves. The women were doubly marginalized in the context of gender and socio-cultural norms. They were broadly deteriorated as symbol of sex, jealousy and revenge. The organizations for the restoration of abducted women seek our attention where almost all women were pregnant as they were raped brutally and were thrown. The misery of women increased when their family refused them so this creates identity crises as an issue. The several of partition themes have been discussed in the concerned research such as separation, alienation, cultural hybridization, replacement and destruction of history. The research paper 'The Plight of Common People in the Partition Literature of Indian Subcontinent' discussed the partition sensitively by contrasting the history and literature. The history and literature seemed two major components in his research paper that portrayed the condition of women through history where their plight and trauma are deprived of the words. The readers failed to find women as the subject before and after the partition. In past their subservient role prepared the platform for the males to induce the power in the social structure.

Partition was an event that brought disaster irrespective of gender but the situation after the partition proved more claustrophobic only for the females. In studying the plight of common people women were ignored because till partition they disastrously failed to gain the status of normative so history did not recognized them after partition. It is through literature they made alive and they are discussed and considered as an individual entity. The examples from the literature are Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, K.A Abas's *Inquilab*, Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man*, Kartar Singh Duggal's *Twice Born Twice Dead*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Bapsi Sidwa's *Ice Candy Man* talked about an incident where the train full of dead bodies and sack full of breast arrived from India to Lahore. The ice candy man's lunatic state is the symbol of chaos during the partition. The literature successfully described the notion of loss and pain. So in this sense literature is human centric and history is only event centric. The only essence of history can be studied in the sense that literature borrowed the event from the history and add notions to it as the result of which victims can identify themselves through the fictional characters created out of the real experiences. The research paper 'Women's Body as the site of

Encroachment: A Critical Study of Amrita Pritam's Novel Pinjar' discussed Puro's sorrow as a daughter, wife and significantly as mother but her world as a woman remains full of trauma and sufferings. The research paper 'The curse of being marginalized women in And Such Is Her Fate by Dalip Kaur Tiwana' depicts the picture of Punjab of 1960s where women were bartered. The research will explore the condition of women, culture of Punjab, colonial and post colonial aspects in the context of Punjabi Literature.

RESEARCH PROBLEMS

- I. Research is restricted to Amrita Pritam's *The Skeleton* and Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, various other prominent writers from Punjab are ignored.
- II. The perception that the birth of male child defines the status of women in the society needs to be addressed.
- III. The value and belief system that suppressed the women need to be reformed considering the social evils of dowry system, female infanticide, domestic violence and sexual assaults.

OBJECTIVE

1. The objective is to explore the various other prominent writers from the Punjab who actually experienced the partition. The literature review informed the readers that Khushwant Singh and Amrita Pritam are widely read as various research papers have been published on their works. In order to fill the research gap it is important to critique the works of other writers from the Punjab such as Ajeet Cour and Kartar Singh Duggal.
2. To examine the historical, socio-political background of Punjab in the context of partition through the works of selected Punjabi writers.
3. To identify various themes like, abduction, restoration, molestation, community, religion, vulnerability, marginalization, stigmatization etc. from different theoretical perspectives.
4. To theorize the works of selected Punjabi writers from the angle of post-colonialism and feminism.

HYPOTHESIS

The research not only acknowledges the condition of Punjabi women but also theoretically analyzes the pain of women during the partition. The works of Punjabi writers such as Amrita Pritam, Ajeet Cour and Kartar Singh Duggal studied the Punjab through their own experiences of partition. The research expounds the reality of Punjab that constitutes the dark history of women discarding the glamorous and bright image of Punjabi women. Foucault's *History of Sexuality* allows the readers to define the role of sexuality in the society of Punjab where women are suppressed from the centuries. It is important to recognize that the most of Punjab's value system functions under the religious aspects of Sikhism. Sikhism as the reformist movement provides the freedom to the women and empowers them with the equal rights. The research paper 'Role and Status of women in Sikh religion through the Guru Nanak perspective' informed the readers about the Sikh Punjabi women who initiated the religious and cultural development in the society. The research also brings forth the question what socio-political situation of Punjab during the partition suppressed the women? Kate Soper's *What is Nature? Culture*,

Politics and Non-Human enlightens the readers about the role of nature that explicitly critiqued the women characters within the institution of marriage and society of Punjab. The research informed the readers about the tussle between the nature and society of Punjab where women are repressed as the other and second sex. The status of women in colonial Punjab is also scrutinized in the context of orient and occident. The research will resolve the question as how did the colonial culture oppressed the women to the extent that they could not find the space in their own society.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative methods are analyzed to conduct the concerned research such as direct observation, content analysis, ethnography and phenomenology. It is through the method of direct observation that one can identify the progress or development of the Punjabi women since partition. The direct observation is about the analyzation of nature of people that informed the readers about the actual condition of Punjabi women in the society as portrayed by the Primary writers. The content analysis of research papers and primary texts informed the readers about the culture of Punjab and the socio-political milieu that led to the holocaust event of partition. The critical analysis of Punjabi writer's works such as Amrita Pritam's *Their Signature*, Kartar Singh Duggals's *Twice Born Twice Dead* and Dalip Kaur Tiwana's *As Such Is her Fate* and Nanak Singh's *Saintly Sinner* acknowledge about the history of Punjabi women and partition vividly analyzing the complex relationship of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. The method of ethnography enhances the research to resolve the problems related to the culture of Punjab. The culture of Punjab is always described the bright and colorful side of Punjab ignoring all its' values and beliefs. The process of ethnography is about the socio-culture study of particular group being the part of that particular society. The selected Punjabi writers provide the vivid picture of Punjab where culture is not only described on the surface level but it's powerful role is also taken into the consideration. The method of phenomenology provides the readers an opportunity to understand the political and colonial aspects of partition of Punjab. In order to have deep insight about the position of women various research papers and books will be critically analyzed to expound the reality of partition of Punjab.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

- I. The study examined the lesser known writers from Punjab.
- II. The research explored the socio-political and historical background of Punjab in the context of Partition that discards the stereotype and stigmatization related to the society of Punjab.
- III. The works of Punjabi writer are theorized from the perspective of orientalism, post-colonialism and feminism that induced the sense of equality in the Punjabi society.
- IV. The research discussed the themes like, abduction, restoration, molestation, community, religion, vulnerability, marginalization, stigmatization etc. in the society of Punjab that encouraged the communal and religious harmony.

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