

Partition, a Conspiracy on Innocence

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Abstract

Partition is a very simple word to hear but to understand it clearly, we have to ask those who lost their blood, bone, present and future without any personal motive or gain. Who wanted and achieved success were the so called great men of the society. They could taste this fruit of partition in the name of religion, caste and creed. The prestige of the commons was raped. The children's eyes were shot before they could see the world. Humanity is seized in the name of religion. The outrage of partition even did not spare the domestics. Today after seventy-three years the common people are still paying its price. My paper covers a number of texts that would look into the socio-political issues during the then India and throws light on the lives of a few fictional characters who had to face the outcomes of the bitter Partition.

In 1947, our country India witnessed the most tragic event of partition. India was divided into two countries: Pakistan and Hindustan. The event affected the lives of people mostly living in the border areas like Punjab, Gujarat, Kashmir and Rajasthan. The barbaric act after partition knew no bounds. It created a boundary between neighbours, friends, fellow men and those who had been living peacefully like a family through centuries irrespective of caste, creed and religion. Even people became demons and killed their own family. They did not see whom they were killing. People started considering weapon as a necessity either for their own safety or to kill others. Some were forced to expel from their thousand-years-inherited dearly homes. They fled in a way that they did not know where, for what and to which direction they were moving. In this run babies, old people and pregnant women were left behind and butchered by others. Unfortunately, in history it was a tragic incident where people were divided and killed in the name of religion but the number of murders, missing people and

rapes were never recorded. The violence that came along has never been forgotten to date. Rivers and streets had become red with the blood of people. People were divided broadly into two categories, the Muslim majority area formed as Pakistan and the Hindu majority area formed as Hindustan.

The population of undivided India in 1947 was approx 390million. After partition there were 330 million in India, 30 million in West Pakistan and 30 million in East Pakistan, which is now Bangladesh. Once the boundaries were established, about 145 million people crossed the borders to what they hoped was relatively safe because of the religious majority. The 1951 census of Pakistan identified the number of displaced persons in Pakistan as 7,226,600, presumably all Muslims who had preferred Pakistan to India. The 1951 census of India enumerated 7,295,870 displaced persons, apparently all the Hindus and Sikhs had moved to India from Pakistan immediately after partition. The overall total is around 14.5 million. Since both the census were held about four years

after the partition, the numbers include net population increase following the mass migrations in 1951. The census led to an estimate of 1.3 million missing Muslims who left Western India but did not reach Pakistan. This puts the total of the missing people, due to Partition related migration along the Punjab border to around 2.2 million. The Indian Government claimed that 33,000 Hindu and Sikh women were abducted and the Pakistani government claimed that 50,000 Muslim women were abducted riots. By 1949, there was a claim that 12,000 women had been recovered in India and 6000 women in Pakistan.

By 1954 there were 20, 728 Muslim Women recovered from India and 9,032 Hindu and Sikh women recovered from Pakistan. Most of the Hindu and Sikh women refused to go back to India, fearing that their families would never accept them. A same fear was mirrored by Muslim women.

During the partition of India, violence against women was an extensive issue. It is estimated that 75,000 to 100,000 women were kidnapped and raped. The rape of women during this period is well documented with women also being complicit in these attacks. Among the eyewitnesses, one was Narinder Kaur Oberoi who was six years old during the time of partition. She has described the atmosphere of utter chaos then, "I recall a very troubled incident where a neighbour of ours had killed his daughter because he feared she would be killed or raped on their way to the border".

Once a granddaughter, who is alive now reported in an interview about the fleeing of her grandmother during the time of partition. She had seen many wells inside Lahore that were full of dead bodies, which were then taken out and buried. This

was published in Delhi Times in August 2018. Another eyewitness Hamida Banu Begum (born 1936) described her vivid memories of crossing the newly made border where she witnessed, "the one incident I cannot forget happened right after we crossed the Ravi River while walking, we saw in front of us in the distance a bare leafless tree from which hung the bodies of five dead men."

By referring to Amrita Pritam's novel "Pinjar", we can realise how many innocent women, child and common people had become victims during the time of partition. They were suffering for nothing and they got nothing from it but they lost their identity and were forced to convert their religion and name. Here the main character named Pooro who was abducted by a Muslim man and was forced to convert her religion and change her name from Pooro to Hamida. The reason behind her kidnapping was revenge. They forced her to swear on the holy Quran to "abduct the Sahukar's daughter before she was wed". Pooro could not accept her situation and she failed to forget her fiancé Ramcharan. She was going through a mental dilemma. She simply asked them a question, "if my uncle abducted your aunt, what fault was that of mine" (p. 188). When Pooro could manage to escape, she was surprisingly rejected by her own parents. Her parents' fear was that "the Shaikh will descend on us and destroy everything we have". Also her mother questioned, "Who will marry you now? You have lost your religion and birth right" (p. 225).

The loss of religion and birthright occurred because Pooro had spent time with Rashid, a Muslim, and it was assumed that Rashid had explored her sexually, though the readers are aware that no sexual encounter

had taken place between them before their marriage. Rashid had already forewarned Pooro about this action. He had mentioned, "If they let you in even once, not of their Hindu friends or relatives will take a drop of water in their house. And you have been with me for 15 days" (p. 188).

The bitter part of Amrita Pritam's novel does not stop here. She has described a mad woman who had come to Pooro's village was impregnated by an unknown man. This act was denounced as inhuman by Pooro, because the poor mad woman did not even realize what had happened to her and died during childbirth. The mad woman was described as "a lump of flesh without a mind to go with it" (p. 196). No one bothered about the religion of the mad woman or her family or even about her survival. Even the child would not have survived if Rashid had not intervened timely. Pooro and Rashid decided to bring up the infant. However, the elder of the village came to the conclusion that, "The mad woman was a Hindu. The Muslims have grabbed a Hindu child. Under the very noses of the Hindus, they have converted a Hindu child into Muslim" (p. 530).

Here Amrita Pritam has described the clear scenario of the time during partition. Chaos happened again for Pooro's family as warfare occurred between the Hindu and Muslim, as the republic of India found itself liberated from British. At that time all Muslims and Hindus fled to opposing sides in order to save themselves. Lajjo who was her sister-in-law got separated from the rest of the family and later she got kidnapped by a Muslim man. It was Rashid, who had earlier kidnapped Pooro, helped Lajjo to get rescued. Lajjo was put in a situation similar to Pooro. Under

Pooro's shelter, she feared returning to the family that once rejected the abducted Pooro's come back. She said, "so far our families have been mourning loss of one, they can grieve the death of two Pooros, I have nowhere to go. What face will I show to anyone" (p. 79). Here Amrita Pritam has analysed the grief of women. They were living like birds in the cages. They were tortured and their identities vanished but could not show their emotions. They were being transferred from this man to that man like some objects. Pooro compared her life twice, first when she was abducted and her situation was rejected by her parents, and second when her return was rejected by her parents in 1948, when families and communities came searching for their females. She was pure and was yet considered unclean at that time, "when it happened to her religion had become an insurmountable obstacle; neither her parents nor her in-laws to be, had been willing to accept her. And now the same religion has become so accommodating?" (p. 112)". Pooro was a victim of revenge, but after Lajjo's abduction and when she got rescued by Pooro's husband, her family wanted to accept her. Not that she hated her people, her community, her India, but she had accepted her bitter truth: "any girl whether Hindu or Muslim is welcomed back in her home, take it that Pooro's soul too has reached back to its home (p. 118)".

There were innumerable Pooros, Lajjos and Kammos who wanted to meet their family after they got abducted by the people of other communities but God might know who among them would have tasted the sweetness of it. A single man can't be blamed for this brutality because the time had wiped the humanity off human beings. The words like brotherhood, tolerance, feeling of oneness,

love, affection had lost their value. History has drawn knowingly or unknowingly the selfish mankind to the court. In my point of view, Partition was nothing but the conspiracy by those who were in power and had certain personal motive against those who were never associated with it and were innocent all through, in the

process those innocents suffered solely. This entire act of partition proved to be disastrous to the innocent mass. Honestly, I don't hesitate to say partition, based upon conspiracy, was a human disaster that occurred in our country. Maybe even after thousands of years it will be remembered in Indian history.

References:

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