

Pinjar

Amrita Pritam

classmate

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Pinjar is a 1950 Punjabi-language novel written by notable Indian poet and novelist Amrita Pritam. In 2000, Pinjar was translated by Khushwant Singh in English with the title of 'The Skelton'. Amrita Pritam was the first important woman writer in Punjabi literature. She wrote novels, essays and poems. She put Punjabi literature on the world map. She was the first woman to receive the Sahitya Academy Award in 1956. Later she received Bhartiya Gyanpith, one of India's highest literary award. The Padmashree was awarded to her in 1969 and finally Padma Vibhushan, India's highest civilian award in 2004.

In the novel Pinjar, Pritam depicts the political and human tragedy that engulfed Punjab in the months of intolerant rioting of during the partition times. It is the story of a Hindu girl, Puro, abducted by a Muslim boy Rashid. Her parents refuse to recover a defiled woman. When the novel starts, we find a happy family in which marriage of Puro and Ram Chander is fixed. In exchange Ram Chander's sister Lajo marriage is fixed with Puro's younger brother Trilok. Everything was fixed and all were suddenly an incident took place which was unexpected and shocking. Puro was kidnapped by a Muslim young boy Rashid to unresolve conflicts between their families which Puro had to pay for it. Even their daughter was kidnapped they did not want to find her because they were worried about their family reputation. Here a voice (Puro) was unheard and does not want to be heard by anyone. She was screaming for her freedom but no one was ready to hear that voice. Even her mother didn't want to hear her own voice about her daughter. For then Puro was almost dead. Later Rashid married to Puro and her name was changed to 'Hamida'. After returning to Rashid, Puro's mental condition becomes the

worst. She has no feelings, no emotions, nothing inside her. In this situation, Puro miscarries but learns somewhat of Rashid's love for her and his repentance for his evil deed. The British Colonialists leave India and the subcontinent reels under the effects of partition. Ramchand's uncle, cousin and Rajjo leave for India and are safe. Ramchand, his parents and Lajjo are caught in the riots. Ramchand hurriedly leaves to India with his younger sister and mother; his father is already missing. Shortly after, Lajjo is kidnapped by thugs. Puro meets Ramchand, who woefully tells her of Lajjo's situation. Puro finds Lajjo and helps her in escape with Rashid's assistance. They conduct Lajjo to Lahore where Trilok and Ramchand come to receive her. Trilok has a tearful reunion with Puro and explains to her that she can start life anew as Ramchand is ready to accept her even now. Puro surprises Trilok by refusing and saying she is where she belongs. Ramchand responds with tremendous empathy to Puro, as he sees that she has accepted Rashid. Rashid slowly tries to fade, making it easy for Puro to leave with her folk, but is heartbroken, as he is deeply in love with her. However, Puro seeks Rashid out and the two tearfully bid Ramchand, Trilok and Lajjo farewell forever.

Thus, Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* is a tale of partition and the impact it has on people prominently on the lives of women. The word 'Pinjar' means skeleton in Punjabi. It is used in the literal sense symbolically to point out the hollowness of the lifeless bodies. The novel has been written from the female perspective about the plight of females through multiple narratives with the help of different characters. Puro, Rajjo, Pagli and Lajjo are the characters who became victims of the patriarchal society. They survived through the partition physically but in turn die in every single moment.