

Speaking Plight of Women in Amrita Pritam's the Skeleton

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Abstract: *The Feminist Theory of Situated Knowers validates the accounts of women by permitting them to portray their plight and add to epistemology by speaking from a position which they have experienced. The protagonists in Skeleton of Amrita Pritam they speak about themselves locale a ground where they can be examined under the example of Situated Knowers Theory in this paper. The protagonist Pooro (Hamida) and other characters Taro, Pooro's mother Tara Use the "Insert Citation" button to add citations to this document., Rashid's aunt and millions of other women who faced varied. They go through thrash about to shed the mesh of the complex conventions to be themselves. Amrita Pritam's selected women characters are strong and they learnt the secret of endurance. Amrita Pritam portrays the desolate elements that are faced by women throughout the life but during partition their pathetic condition grew up higher to the level. She also portrays declining standard element of human through her novel she has an in-depth and idiosyncratic approach towards feminism because of she was also a war victim.*

Keywords: *Situated Knowers, epistemology, standpoint theory, Amrita Pritam, Self-exploration*

I. INTRODUCTION

"It was a sin to be alive in a world so full of evil, thought Hamida. It was a crime to be born a girl."

Amrita Pritam heaves a feminist voice through the speaking women characters of her novel *Pinjar /skeleton* author describes the agony of women during partition despite of their religion. The novel shows that communal hatred was mainly and deeply rooted in the minds of Hindus and Muslims. The novel is a saga of the sorrow and compassion of women of both sides. Author appropriately draws the woman dilemma and frustration in the novel through various incidents. The story also represents the canvas of manipulate partition and consolidate political power. The female characters in *Skeleton* make vigorous statement about plight of victims of war on both sides. Pritam in her novel illustrated through various incidents, how women had to go through a substantial amount of atrocities, hardships and how their identities were thrashed. *Skeleton* highlight the suffering of their female protagonists, their journey through war and adjustment post war.

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Pritam aptly represents in *Skeleton* that how women become a victim of oppression.

"Feminist epistemology and philosophy of science studies the ways in which gender does and ought to influence our conceptions of knowledge, the knowing subject, and practices of inquiry and justification. It identifies ways in which dominant conceptions and practices of knowledge attribution, acquisition, and justification systematically disadvantage women and other subordinated groups, and strives to reform these conceptions and practices so that they serve the interests of these groups" (Anderson). The characters of Amrita Pritam tell tales of gender, racial and ethnic complications shedding light on the challenges faced by victims of war but the focus of this paper is the feminist aspect of Amrita Pritam's work and the application of the *Situated Knowers* Theory to her novel and various Female characters. Furthermore, as *Situated Knowers*, the characters of Pritam's have knowledge regarding the social oppression, subjugation and extreme conditions faced by women but they acquire the status of survivors. One of the largest forms of aggression of one community over the other has usually been physical attack on women. These acts have been perceived as acts of dishonoring the whole community. There has been the notion of the protection of the "honor" of the women in each of the communities that women were forced to either commit suicide to obstruct the humiliation of getting sexually assaulted and dishonored, or they were actually murdered. Various writers describe the sexual aggression suffered by women, their bodies injured and disfigured. Ironically, male members chosen to kill women of their family or community in order to safe guard their self respect. Women were idolized as epitome of honor although she was neglected in family and family decisions but she was an easy target for sexual assault and bringing dishonor to particular family or community. It is evident from Pritam's writing that her real strength was in the genuineness and realness of her experience and the demanding sincerity of her voice to speak truth and nothing but truth. But above all, she had given voice to the long muted and muffled voice of the war victim woman seeking her human dignity.

II. THE SHADES OF FEMINISM IN SKELETON

The female protagonists of Amrita Pritam have to face several challenges to find their sense of identity and self

within the perimeters of a huge society during and after the war across the border.

“Her excellence in prose-writing lies not only in her art or craft but in the development of the feminine personality” (Arora 22). Amrita’s writing gives a peep into Amrita’s soul bleeding distress at the brutal treatment towards women. Through writing she not only hopes to change the approach, thought processing but outlook of people towards women. She said that she cannot change the world but could make people conscious of the grime a women faces in the society. Further, the female characters of Amrita Pritam are a reflection of her own experiences and struggle in society before and post war as someone who was forcefully dispersed from their native land. The women in Pritam’s novels react physically, intellectually and emotionally to a variety of situations. Pritam’s heroine *Pooro* find a way and emerges as stronger woman who not only faces bold situation boldly but also helps other war victim women around her as a gesture of humanity.

All these facets also emphasize the role of Pritam and her characters as Situated Knowers. Women during war and women in many parts of the world who are victims of war in general not only subjected to household violence or violence in other forms but the most complex form of violence they have to go through is psychological. A woman’s point of view or female outlook toward any incident could be different from a man’s observation or man’s point of view, The experience for man and woman is always different as their ways of looking at life and living life in the same society are different it is due to different set of rule which are imposed on them by society and they have to define their ideologies in their respective boundaries. Women can better portray the psychic mind of women, the feeling of inferiority, a sense of contempt for their own sex. *Feminist epistemology* and viewpoint of science learn the ways in which gender does and ought to persuade our notions of knowledge, the knowing subject, and practices of inquiry and justification. It identify ways in which prevailing notions and practices of knowledge provenance, acquirement, and justification steadily disadvantages women and other subordinated groups, and endeavor to reform these notions and practices, so that they serve the interests of male. This also makes a statement about the characters of Pritam as *Situated Knowers*. Amrita Pritam’s Indian birth and victim of partition accentuate that she has closely observed and noted the “sexual assault” and “atrocities” that women of both sides are subjected to during partition. The work and characters of Amrita Pritam can be scrutinized in light of the feminist theory be valid to *Situated Knowers*. It often happens that the gender effect on the knowledge of different situations and confrontation. The feminist theory of *Situated Knowers* emphasizes the implication of realization of the plight of a group of people or more particularly women from a position in which they might have a possibility to experience barriers or extreme emotional pressure in a situation reacting to it strongly as women.

The feminist theory of Situated Knowers emphasizes that the past status of knowers including their profile,

“emotions, relationships with others, and social status”, leaves an impact on the availability of knowledge to them and the manner in which they make their pronouncement or declaration of knowledge in the form of displaying, validating and embracing it as dominant (Gardner). In other words, women go through obstacles and issues which are often explicit to women and men may not have accurate knowledge about their situation and emotional turbulence they go through. Feminist theory states that past and personal experiences affects emotional reaction of a situated knower, which may actually add to the prospect of ‘epistemic privilege’ (Janack) here Pritam who is a situated knower is aware of, incident like partition and has experienced this closely as women what others specially men have not experienced. Application of the Theory to Amrita Pritam’s *Skeleton*, When the feminist theory of *Situated Knowers* is applied to the selected novel, it point out a perspective on the various incidents and situations faced by women during and post partition. Further, Pritam’s work depicts the wretched condition of characters in novel. “Subjective identification with one’s social groups can take several forms. One may simply know oneself to have certain ascribed identities. One may accept or endorse these identities, actively affirming the norms and roles associated with them. Or one may regard one’s social identities as oppressive (if, say, one’s identity is cast by society as evil, contemptible, or disgusting), yet see one’s fate as tied with the groups with which one is identified, and commit oneself to collective action with other members of those groups to overcome that oppression” (Anderson). On the surface, the characters of *Skeleton* may seem to be about the plight of partition victims but majorly women go through the destitution and impoverishment. The novel illustrates the struggle of female characters to reaffirm their identities because of their gender.

Skeleton instigated from the standpoint of a Situated Knower portraying the thrash about of an Indian women during partition though they migrated to other side of the line they were nostalgic about their roots. The novel also reflects Pritam’s own horrendous and unspeakable experience of partition in the form of the protagonist *Pooro* substantiate her role as a Situated Knower. Additionally, *Pooro*’s role is a classic portrayal of victim of partition and Patriarchy, a feminist tale on the intricacies faced by women during and after partition. Since *Pooro* was abducted and forcefully married to *Rashid* as an act of revenge between men to two different communities, she was used as an instrument to take revenge. Later she has to meet the disapproval of her acceptance from her family when she managed to escape from *Rashid*. Mother says to *Pooro* that they are helpless to help her ...she must accept this misfortune as her destiny and they cannot accept her as the community will discard them

and nobody will marry her younger sisters as she has lost her religion. If sheiks will come to know that we given u shelter they would not leave any traces of her father and brother..... Here Poro has to make another sacrifice for her family by not asking them to accept her.

she was already a victim of revenge between two families loggerheaded males and still sacrifices were demanded for the well being of the members of family specially male (Poro's father and brother). The concept of embodiment becomes important here because in light of this concept, people experience different happenings through the medium of their bodies and react in unique ways. Those who approach a subject from the front will be of a different perspective than those having a bird's eye view. (O' Donohue)Poro and all the other women had willfully abandoned their family for the sake of well being their family members. It depicts the brutality of the plight faced by Poro and other women in the role of a *Situated Knower*. Here only a *Situated Knower* may be conscious of the distressing nature of society towards women during Partition. Further, the character of Poro experiences the kind of isolation that can only come from facing a complex assortment of difficulties as a woman and refugee, the theory of Situated Knowers facilitates to comprehend the notion in a much enhanced way. At one point, Pritam describes Poro's ordeal by underlining the torment she feels when her mother says "Daughter, this fate was ordained for you, we are helpless. The sheikhs will descend on us and destroy everything we have." Poro and all the women who were rejected from acceptance are at the heart of a situation which they may not have faced if they were not a woman and therefore, her position as a *Situated Knower* becomes clear in this context.

Men were also victims of partition but they never went through in acceptance from their own family due to societal pressure they were accepted whole heartedly. Poro's and many other women' arc of existence and social location justify their position as a *Situated Knower* because they are competent enough to reveal the issues faced by women during partition. It is only Poro who is conscious of her situation. Pritam's depicts the plight and exploitation faced by Poro, Taro and underscores their position as a *Situated Knower*. After marrying a Rashid, Poro becomes "Hamida" symbolizing the conversion a woman as a situated knower, goes through in the patriarchy after marriage. In India, the identity of a woman as an individual usually ceases to exist after marriage. Poro is forced to sheds identity to attain new roles as one day Rashid brought a stranger with him and make a tattoo on her arm. This tattoo was showing her new name, "Hamida", after her marriage with Rashid. He used dark green ink to draw the name. Green colour is a holy colour for Muslim community. Here Pritam depicts the scene of Poro's conversion of religion. This partion has snatched away the identities of women of both the side (communities). Although Poro was silent but her soul was

resisting the new identity which was imposed on her just as if she was cattle and his masters mark was necessary on her body and as the story progresses, it is evident that she could not sheds her past, her family, her love for Ramcharan her fiancé whom she again met in refugee camp searching her sister Taro who also happens to be her brother's wife. As like any other abducted girl, Taro faces the several problems. During partition society almost neglected the abducted girls and treated as animals. Poro along with Rashid looked out for Lajo and found out, during her conversation Lajo refused to go back to the family like other victims. These changed names highlight the unlike levels of journey of millions of women whose identities were thrashed, as a Situated Knower featuring a woman's struggles in unfavorable surroundings.

Poro emerges as a face for feminism as a Situated Knower because she makes her own choices and instead of succumbing to situation when Poro handed over Lajo to Ramcharan in the refugee camp. In the refugee camp Poro meets her brother Trilok who becomes happy, that Poro finally returned. On the other hand, Ramcharan was ready to accept her even now. Poro is welcomed lovingly by Ramcharan. Poro decides that she is where she belongs - with Rashid. Despite of abducting her, Rashid never said anything bad to her and had soft corner for her. Rashid also helped Poro to search Lajo and handed over Lajo and Poro to Ramcharan at the Refugee camp for a fresh start, this would help him to come out from his guilt (abducting Poro). Hamida as wife knew the agony through which Rashid has went through these years and his repentance. This grew respect for him in her heart and she accepted him as his son's father and husband and she doesn't want to go through the same pain of separation through which she has already been. She wanted to stay back help all the helpless women who are left behind or want to reunite with their family or family wants them back. The role of Poro as a *Situated Knower* is also evident from other aspects of her journey. Poro's emerged as a strong feminist becomes more distinctive when she decides to stay back to help other victims.

III. CONCLUSION

The application of *Situated Knowers* and *Standpoint theory* helps to highlight the issues faced by women during partition because it is only women can share her experiences and offer a credible testimony of the same. Amrita Pritam falls under the class of those writers who demonstrate the plight, patience and power a woman holds despite the harsh realities and challenges. The challenges that women faced, especially during partition, can only are experienced by woman. Poro had to face rejection from her family and accept the abduction as her destiny. Rejection of women victims by society and family oppressed them which were depicted in Pritam's novels. Poro demonstrates cruising through life despite being subjugated, mocked and challenged. The novel demonstrates its protagonist and other female



characters to be treated with same respect , dignity and not like an instrument to take revenge among communities themselves. The benefits of the *Situated Knower* and *Standpoint theory* is prospective assistance in stressing the concerns and confronts faced by women by learning from their own account and experiences because only a woman knows her own and other women's struggles.

Situated Knowers theory can help in making society better by sharing real issues faced by women and their consequences and finding solutions to challenging behaviors , norms and standards in society.

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