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Portrayal of Woman in the Works of Amrita Pritam -A Review

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KEYWORDS	

Indian women novelists have given a new aspect to Indian Literature in English. Indian women's writing began in the 19th century. Women Writers modeled their work on the romantic tradition of the west. Since then, the enduring, self-sacrificing image of a woman of the old world has been replaced by the independent woman who is in control of herself and her life. The objective of this study is to explore the select works of Amrita Pritam and to prove that a new feminine sensibility is slowly evolving a nd is getting established in India. It critically analyzes the self- concept of Indian women as derived from socio-religious, political and cultural traditions and beliefs, down the ages. The study establishes that there is a new self-concept of Indian woman e m e r g in g from the works of Amrita Pritam. The new Indian woman is making her presence felt in a striking way by means of self-assertion with roots in modern education, exposure to development, cultural contacts and the exploitations of one's capabilities and mental resources, to point out how this self-concept will empower woman to achieve self actualization and how it is instrumental in bringing about rewarding changes, in the individual and society at large.

The review highlights how Amrita Pritam's women search for identity and truth in various genres of literature about the women protagonists and the struggles which they pass through and eventually empower themselves in the process thereby reconstructing their selfhood and redefining their identity. The following literature reviews attempt to demonstrate and support the objective of the study.

In the research article by P.N.Lal (1973) "Tragic Contents in Amrita Pritam's Two Faces of Eve." presented an image of women's life which culminated into the surrender of the hegemony of reason to the predicament of impeccable passion. One limitation of the study is although written in prose creates an aura of a poetic tragedy through the coalescence of her subtle perception of chaotic life of women and the pattern of art and order imposed on it and another limitation of the study is the question of submission to the oppression and sufferings of women. In the research article by Ramakrishnan, E. V (1978) in "The Revenue Stamp: An Autobiography" projected on Amrita's autobiography which captured the spirit of her life and work. "The Revenue Stamp" is her stamp on cognitive life-vision of a woman. It is an expression of romantic mind and the sufferings of woman in her. Through the experience of the physical world she attained the manifestation of the spiritual reality of life. She had an unusual feminine dignity and sensitivity which explored a process of development and she visualized this process as a fulfillment of her quest for life.

According to Renu Juneja (1979) in "Then, Will Be, And Now: or How the Woman Becomes Contemporary in Amrita Pritam's Fiction" stated that Amrita's fiction of the early fifties took us back to India's partition. As the sensitive and anguished writer Amrita tried to come to terms with this traumatic historical moment. In the fictions of sixties Amrita had

gained the courage to forget and demolish the present and build the new future. In the modern era they stood for their pitiless honesty, subjecting themselves to the most hazardous experiments in unconventional and uncompromised emotional living. The aim of her characters was not merely to live, but to find how to live – unsubjected, uncompromised and uncommitted, except to their own sense of human dignity, emotional purity and truthfulness. The new women in Amrita Pritam's work worked hard to seek honesty in the relationship between man and woman and the characters were so secure and confident both psychologically and economically.

In the study conducted, Vinodha (1983) in "Images of Women in Amrita Pritam's Fiction" exemplified women in Amrita Pritam's fiction who accepted the conventional morality with the placidity. The substance of this fiction was made of the lives of women in whom a kind of holy unrest was created by the assertion of the natural impulses of love and freedom. This unrest was seen to transform them into human beings revolting against convention in the name of love and freedom. Thus the study focused on women protagonists who searched for identity and truth.

In the research article of Bhagwat S (1984) in "Two Memorable Autobiography" projected on the comparative study on K.A Abbas and Amrita Pritam. Abbas choose to call his book an experiment in his creative endeavors and expressions. It was a fascinating record of struggles and achievements. Failures and frustration, of a man who found himself vigorously involved in the fields of journalism and literature films and theatres, and politics and society similarly Amrita Pritam's autobiography depicted the story of a rebellion, romantic, lonely, occasional timid, but manifestly honest woman. It had the passionate intensity of a poem, curiosity, wonder and excitement. The study focused on the comparative and contrastive study of new-man and new-woman emergence.

Harcharan Singh (1995) in "Village No: 36" asserted that it was a touching tale, set against the backdrop of the Kangra valley, of a man living in a make-believe world, opting for a women every time. While the heroine Alka who loved him passionately, is distracted to the point of herself available as a prostitute but man as he turns is a brooding Byronic artist – painter who cannot tell whether he would forever aye be on the side of love or hate. Alka stood for her true love and continued her relationship although Kumar changed women often. She thus changed his mind to understand and accept her sincere and true love. The focus of the study is the women protagonist and the struggles which she passed through and eventually empowered herself in the process thereby reconstructing her selfhood and redefining her identity

I.U.Menon (1995) "The Revenue Stamp and Kamala Das's My Story: A Comparative Study" projected on both Amrita Pritam and Kamala Das who had an unconventional ways of thinking and become controversial in the society. They had revolted against the traditional man-woman relationship. Their

attitude of sexuality was different from the puritanical attitude of their contemporaries. They challenged all the taboos. They disapproved the conventional marriage of girls at an early age and the wide age gap between husband and wife. In the research article by D.R More (1995) "The Skeleton: An Apology for Women's Emancipation" emphasized the religious and clan feuds during partition of India. Amrita Pritam's novel "Pinjar", translated into English by Kushwant Singh, was set against the background of partition of India which resulted in the exploitation of women at the hands of men. The play of love and hate, the complexities of human mind and above all the predicament of the abducted women are depicted on the back ground of the partition- tragedy. The study focused on the woman protagonist Pooro who accepted the conventional ways of life forced by the society for the benefit of her child's life. Although her she was uprooted she enforced sisterhood to save Lajo her sister-in-law to reach her roots and settled with her family being abducted as Pooro.

Soma Banerjee (1995) in "The Tale of a Cleft Soul: Duality of Women in the Novels of Amrita Pritam" focused on the relationship between men and women who must make willing and emotional acknowledgement of each other as true individuals. That is the ideal state, but the male-dominated Indian society should dictate otherwise to protect their identity. The study focused on all Amrita Pritam's women such as Mamta (Dr.Dev) Anita (two Faces of Eve) or Annie (The Aerial) - floundered between voluntary and involuntary memory and kept their own sense of values. They were amphibious psychologically, creatures dominated at once by fact and by vision who inhabited solid yet shifting terrains of the mind and were subjected to its terror and ecstasies.

Mohinder Singh(1998) opines "The Search for Feminine Integrity" to study the autobiographical works of Kamala Das and Amrita Pritam, the poet- novelist have set forth their lives accounts with a boldness somewhat unusual for Indian women writers. Howsoever dissimilar are the two women are both search for festivity and self realization for a milieu where a woman can live a life essential on her own terms and not the ones dictated by an exploitative male ruled world. It is their version of female liberation. The tension of the identity problem with yawning gap between their self- image and their social recognition boils over in this exercise of self-assertion and self- display, the standard stuff of autobiography.

In the research article by P.V Dhamija's (2000) "Cognitive Modes in Amrita Pritam's Fiction" explored the cognitive modes in Amrita Pritam's Fiction. This preamble was necessary since the modes she generally employed were eminently suited to the portrayal of love and search for truth and self identity in her women characters. In the research conducted by Nikky Guninder Kaur (2000) "Her Agony and Ecstasy" Sing gave a glimpse of Amrita Pritam's Soul bleeding in torment at the inhuman treatment meted out to women in the country during partition. One limitation of the study is the subtle perception of chaotic life of women and another limitation of the study is the question of submission to the oppression and sufferings of women.

Samyukta (2003) asserted in "Stench of Kerosene" that a woman was valued as long as she was useful to serve, to bear children and do her duty. It also pointed to the brutality aspect of marriage and how society had little regard for women. It also showed the strong influence of societal-culture that destroyed a marriage and young lives of women. The study focused on women who were expected to fulfill societal obligations of creation and procreation. Being desolate was a plight for a woman. A woman was considered as an empty pod without seed in it if they fail to bear children and she had to be replaced. The study not only focused on the death of a infantile girl, a youthful love, but loss of conviction and unfairness inflicted on a woman. Pain was the most abiding condition of woman's being. Society inflicted disarray in the life of women. Limitation of the study is the way women subjected her her to death for the condition of the society should be replaced by the search of the protagonist's integrity to lead life to find her true self to serve society and self.

According to the research conducted by Sitakant Mahapatra (2005) "Remembering Two Icons: Amrita and Nirmal" an attempt was made to study by comparing and contrasting two authors' women protagonists with a view to understand their status and condition; and appreciate their trials and tribulations, heart and soul under the influence of society and culture. The study focused on self-sacrificing image of a woman of the old world has been replaced by the independent woman who is in control of herself and her life Thus from the study of these articles taken together, the review focuses on Amrita Pritam's women who search for identity and truth in various genres of literature such as Autobiography, fiction and short stories. Further, it discusses the women protagonists and the struggles which they pass through and eventually empower themselves in the process thereby reconstructing their selfhood and redefining their identity. Amrita Pritam presents an upheaval and turmoil in the lives of their women characters and the way they realize their self actualization and identifies new self concept in Indian society and how they have presented age-old values and culture and have broken the shackles and customs through their women characters, reworded the concept of self and their guest for identity and combined it with the issue of female desire. All the works which have been taken up for analysis, have women at the centre of action who are brave and bold and stand up against the prevalent gender-based norms to seek an independent identity. Some additional dimensions would include examining how the women characters rise above the given constructs of silence and subversion; their sense of selfconcept and their conception of a new identity. It would also focus on their ways of coping; their inner strength and determination, resolve and resilience.

As a scope of further research studies can be conducted on prose and poetry on theme of alienation. Sufism in her poetry can be explored. Philosophical theme in poetry and New Historicism in her partition novels can be analyzed.

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