

REFUGEE, MIGRATION, DIASPORA

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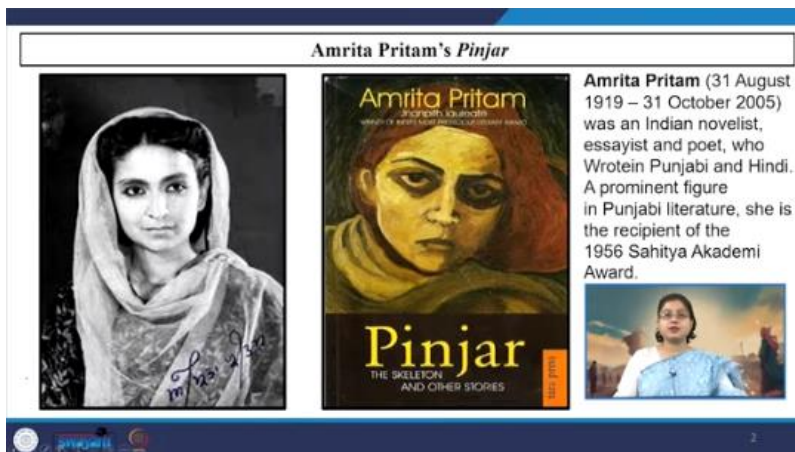
Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee

Lecture 24

Lecture 24: Understanding Amrita Pritam's Pinjar

Thank you. Good morning and welcome back to the lecture series on Refugees, Migration, and Diaspora. So, today we are going to start with a new topic. Our topic of discussion today is Amrita Pritam's novel *Pinjar*. Chandraprakash Dwivedi has made a film based on this novel, *Pinjar*.

So, our discussion today is about Amrita Pritam's novel *Pinjar*. Pritam was an Indian novelist, essayist, and poet who wrote in Punjabi as well as Hindi. She was a prominent figure in Punjabi literature and the recipient of the 1956 Sahitya Akademi Award. Amrita Pritam is proclaimed as *Akkharan di Jaayi*. So, *Akkharan di Jaayi* means 'daughter of words.'



Unlike the daughters who would be brought up in an undivided India with feudal patriarchal values, we see that Pritam did not grow up in a very traditional way with occupations seen as necessary for women in their roles as homemakers. She defies that stereotypical position of a woman within the home. Pritam rather chooses to stitch words together to create what she poetically calls a tapestry of radiance—a metaphor for a borderless, equal, and just world, an egalitarian world that she envisioned through her


powerful writing, the literary oeuvre she created over seven decades of dedicated work as a novelist and poet.

So, noted Dogri writer Padma Sachdev calls Pritam, as I quote Sachdev, 'an ornament of Punjabi literature, an ornament of Punjabi literature, the sandalwood paste on its forehead spreading fragrance, one bank of the river where all five streams of Punjabi literature mingled,' unquote. Progressing through various social and political movements, her uninhibited, provocative expression of the personal paved the way for greater articulation of authentic experience, and her writing ushered in modernism in theme and style. So, in terms of her theme and style, she was experimenting a lot. She was also playing around with new ideas, bringing in fresh perspectives. You know, thoughts in terms of the form and content in Punjabi literature.

So, her intervention was unique. It was novel and very, very creative, which got appreciated later on. Revti Saran Sharma finds Amrita's brand of feminism to be milder when compared to the strident position, often a very Marxist position, that Ismat Chughtai assumes. Even such strident positions are assumed by other authors like Khadija Mastoor, Sarala Devi, and Mannu Bhandari. So, Amrita's brand of feminism was a little different from Chughtai, Mastoor, Devi, and Bhandari.

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- Revti Saran Sharma, finds Amrita's brand of feminism milder when compared to the stridency of Ismat Chughtai, Khadija Mastoor, Sarala Devi and Mannu Bhandari
- Sharma (1969) proclaims, "Amrita genuinely feels in essence that the woman is her own captive and if she chooses to be a 'full being', freedom and fulfillment will flow to her as naturally as water to fields below"
- Amrita's writings question not just the plague of patriarchy, but religious fanaticism and social inequality as well
- Even as a child, she resisted, and ultimately prevailed upon, her grandmother to shun the discriminatory practice of keeping separate utensils for Muslims and Hindus




Sharma proclaims that Amrita genuinely feels, in essence, that the woman is her own captive, and if she chooses to be a full being, freedom and fulfillment will flow to her as naturally as water to fields below. So, Amrita's writings question not just the plague of patriarchy but also intervene in topics such as religious fanaticism and social inequality. As a child, Amrita resisted and ultimately prevailed upon her grandmother, who tried to instill certain discriminatory practices in her. So, she would rebel and defy the norm of separating utensils for Hindus and Muslims.

Amrita Pritam's novel *Pinjar*, translated as *The Skeleton* and published in 1950, portrays the shackles that chain women against the backdrop of partition and evokes the significance of individual autonomy. Pritam stood for and voiced the idea of equality in all relations, leading to a vision of universal humanism and a harmonious global order. The journey of Pritam's protagonist, Puro or Purinder in *Pinjar*, is later envisioned as being carried forward by Sheeri, the Muslim protagonist in the novel *Unninja din*, translated as *49 Days* in 1978. Pritam had an unshakable and firm belief in the imperative to ensure agency for all human beings, regardless of their background, caste, class, creed, race, religion, or gender. According to her, the bounty of the earth, the resources of the earth, is a shared heritage that everyone can enjoy, and everyone has the right to enjoy.

Pinjar, or *The Skeleton*, is a 1950 Punjabi-language novel written by Pritam. In 2009, *Pinjar* was translated into English by Khushwant Singh. The novel depicts the conditions and nature of Indian society during the partition of India in 1947. Amrita Pritam poured her own experiences and observations into the novel. She portrayed women's lives during the partition period.

Pinjar comprises vignettes from women's lives. It could be their social life as well as their psychic life, what women underwent during the partition. *Pinjar* almost acts as a collage of the many pictures of women's experiences, their sensibilities, their challenges, and difficulties. In the story, we see the Hindu girl and protagonist Purinder, or Puro, being abducted by a Muslim man called Rashid.

Puro's parents refused to accept the defiled girl, the so-called defiled girl, even when she manages to escape from Rashid's home and his clutches. *Pinjar* is widely considered one of the outstanding works of Indian fiction set during the period of Partition. As I have already mentioned, the novel has been adapted into a film directed by Chandra Prakash Dwivedi. Chandrakumar Prakash Dwivedi adapted this novel into the 2003 Hindi film of the same title, starring Urmila Matondkar, Manoj Bajpayee, and Sanjay Suri in lead roles. The *Pinjar* movie, after receiving critical acclaim, went on to win the National Film Award for Best Feature Film on National Integration.

Amrita Pritam's <i>Pinjar</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pinjar</i> is the story of a Hindu girl, Puro, abducted by a Muslim man, Rashid • Puro's parents refuse to accept the defiled girl when she manages to escape from Rashid's home • <i>Pinjar</i> is widely considered one of the outstanding works of Indian fiction set during the period of the Partition of India • The novel was adapted in the 2003 Hindi film of the same title (<i>Pinjar</i>), starring Urmila Matondkar, Manoj Bajpai and Sanjay Suri in the lead roles 	

Pinjar portrays the fates of cursed daughters from Punjab, such as Puro and Lajo, as well as other women, and it focuses on how the culture of honor collapses around women. The 1947 violence shows the brunt of this violence on women's bodies. Through women's experiences, the disruption of pre-Partition norms and codes is foregrounded through the violence on women's bodies, through the tarnishing of women's bodies, the disruption of pre-Partition norms and codes is foregrounded. A focus on the gendered dimension of Partition complicates our understanding of the event's traumatic consequences or traumatic after-effects. Both the abduction of women and their recovery by the newly independent nation-states are linked in complex ways and are even questioned by different critics.

How do such survivors' bodies, how do the bodies of abduction and rape survivors reconcile with pre-Partition norms and codes of honor? And where do they belong? Where do these survivors, these abduction and rape survivors, belong within the larger project of nationalism and nation-building? Are they invisibilized? Are they really accommodated back into their original families?

Where do they belong? After rehabilitation? So, the movie adaptation of Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* deals with the protagonist Puru's plight and trauma as that of a woman with a fluid identity, who is caught in the crossfire of communal frenzy, to quote Nonika Dutta. So, according to Nonika Datta, Puru eventually transcends her bitter experience, becomes emotionally attached to her abductor Rashid, and overcomes her initial prejudice against him. She marries Rashid, acquires the new Muslim name Hamida, and yet she still maintains her fluid identity.

She was neither one nor the other. So, she... Kind of, she represents that no man's land. She's almost, in a way, a fragmented identity, a permanently fragmented identity like Toba

Tek Singh, like a borderland culture. She almost posits the borderland culture on her body, onto her body.

She is the personification of the third space. So, in Urvashi Butalia's *The Other Side of Silence*, Kamlaben Patil recounts that nearly 75,000 women had been raped and abducted on both sides of the partition. Along with rapes, women also underwent several specific kinds of violence, such as being made to parade without clothes, and some of them had their private parts cut off and mutilated, and so forth. Patel further recollects that tattoos with marks of other religions were made on the bodies of women with the idea of defiling and desecrating the purity of their race. And these women were forced to have sex with men of other religions.

At times, children who were born of these inter-communal forceful cohabitations were forcefully taken away from them. So the children born out of rape were then forcibly taken away from the women. Some families traded their women in order to achieve their own freedom. Sometimes the families would leave their women behind in order to be able to cross the border safely. They would trade their women to ensure their own preservation and safety.

Women were also abducted from camps, from refugee camps, or from the kafilas or caravans of people who were marching across the border on foot. Pinjar is about a young girl, Puru, who is about to get married to her fiancé, Ramchand. And days before her marriage, she is abducted by Rashid, who is a Muslim man. And we see that Rashid abducts Puru not only because of personal lust or desire for her, but there is also some familial dispute. There is a dispute, a longstanding dispute between Rashid and Puru's family where generations back, a senior woman from Rashid's family had been similarly abducted by Purinder's forefathers.

Purinder's ancestors; and their honor, Rashid's family's honor, had been tarnished that way. So he, as a way of getting even with Purinder's family, forces Purinder to go with him. He abducts her forcefully. He marries her by force and changes her name to Hamida. When Puru escapes from her abductor's family, however, her own parents refuse to take her.

That's because they are located in a Muslim-majority area, which is to become Pakistan later on. They understand that they are a minority in a land, and soon after partition, this land would become Pakistan. So their essential position is no more. Although they are landlords, they are a well-to-do family, aristocrats compared to Rashid's family, who are essentially peasants. The scenario has changed a lot, you know, in the face of partition

when the Hindus, even if they are landlords or rich people, don't have much say in a Muslim-majority land.


So, if they take Puru back, they might jeopardize their own position in every sense. So, they refuse to accept their female child. Within some months, the partition violence intensifies. This story begins at a point when partition is yet to happen. It's in the pre-partition phase.

And then, within several months, the partition violence intensifies, making many people its victims. Through Puro's life, Pritam shows us the lives of several other women who have been similarly victimized by the bifurcation of the Indian subcontinent. So, Puru and her sister-in-law Lajo's lives can be perceived as having been entrapped in a communal conundrum. They are supposed to play the role of the powerless victim, which, according to Chandra Talpade Mohanty, the Third World women stereotype expects them to play.

So Mohanty points out that there is a stereotype about the normative behavior of third-world women. Both Puru and Lajo have these social expectations that entrap them in terms of social values, in terms of social dictates, and expect them to play certain roles internally, especially the role of the powerless victim, the damsel in distress who awaits, you know, masculine intervention and, you know, a savior to come and save them. So, here we would also see that, paradoxically, Puru's fiancé's name is Ramchandra, and in the original epic Ramayana, Sita is a very docile, meek woman who waits for her husband Ram to come and rescue her.

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- Pooru's and Laajo's lives can be perceived as having been entrapped in a communal conundrum. They are supposed to play the role of the powerless victim that, as Chandra Talpade Mohanty points out the third world woman stereotype expects them to play
- Laajo's character is an example of a similar stereotype where she depends on her family and Pooru for her protection and happiness. Pooru, on the other hand defies the stereotype by owning her life choices and by protecting and rescuing the victimized Laajo



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It's very different in this story. Although her fiancé is Ramchand, Puru writes her own fate. She is the enactor, she is the enabler of her own fate. She decides which side of the border she belongs to and what will happen to her future.

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So, Lajo's character in the novel and film is an example of a stereotypical, you know, third-world woman that Mohanty discusses. Lajo is dependent; she depends on her family and on Puru for her protection and happiness. So, she cannot support herself. On the other hand, Puru is unconventional in that sense because she defies the stereotype by owning her life choices and by protecting and rescuing another victimized woman, Lajo. Puru is not only preserving herself, but later she emerges as a very strong person and rescues her sister-in-law, Lajo.

So, Pritam shows how Puru, who later on becomes Hamida, defies patriarchal and territorial boundaries and effectively uses her agency to understand the reality of partition by choosing to stay on in Pakistan. The issue of abduction is central to Pritam's concerns. But she is dealing with this, you know, topic of women's abduction with a difference. Pritam situates the issue of abduction within the framework of Hindu patriarchal identity and the patriarchal families, the feudal families anxiety. So,

Pritam's worldview in a way contrasts with the chauvinist perspective that interprets abduction as an act of Muslim depravity and aggression and which tends to target the entire Muslim community as culpable. So, Pritam is looking at this issue of abduction beyond the Hindu-Muslim, you know, tiff or Hindu-Muslim difference. She shows how the woman is doubly victimized, where once she is taken away by the Muslim male and she chooses to run away from there,

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- Pritam shows how Pooru/Hamida defies patriarchal and territorial boundaries and effectively uses her agency to critique the reality of Partition by choosing to stay on in Pakistan
- The issue of abduction is central to Pritam's concerns, but with a difference. She situates it within the framework of Hindu identity and patriarchal anxiety. Her worldview contrasts with the chauvinist perspective that interprets abduction as an act of Muslim depravity and aggression, and targets the entire Muslim community for its culpability
- Pinjar is the story of a woman's liminal position in the face of hardening religious and national boundaries. Pooru /Hamida is an example of that liminality. Yet, she emerges as an active agent in shaping her destiny. Amrita shows that an abducted and raped woman is not a mere victim; her pain and anguish can be a source of powerful energy for her new identity



even her Hindu family is not taking her back because they are also tied down by certain feudal, you know, patriarchal values and constraints. So rather than really targeting any community, for example, the Muslim community as entirely culpable, she is targeting patriarchy and patriarchal values. Both the Muslim and the Hindu men, you know, are being in a way criticized through Pritam's writing. So, Pinjar is the story of a woman's liminal position in the face of hardening religious and national boundaries.

Puru or Hamida is an example of that liminality, and yet she emerges as an active agent in shaping her own destiny. She is the enabler of her own destiny. Amrita shows that an abducted and raped woman is not a mere victim. Her pain and anguish can be a source of powerful energy that generates, that engenders a new identity according to her own volition. Noliya Dutta writes of Amrita Pritam's life story that not all Punjabis identified with a monolithic religion.

Especially the experiences of women were fragmented and historical. She writes, I quote Dutta here, Pritam's experience of Partition impels her to invoke a shared culture of symbols and language, and to transgress and ultimately transcend the languages of religious and communal mobilization, unquote. The India-Pakistan governments came up with the Inter-Dominion Treaty to recover the abducted women. To clarify what encompassed abduction, 1st March 1947 was the date that was decided

to be the marker after which any woman seen to be living with or having a relationship with a man from any other religion would be presumed as abducted or taken by force. So, after 1st March 1947, It was decided unanimously by both India and Pakistan. Any woman seen to be living with or having a relationship with a man from another religion would be presumed as abducted or taken by force. This kind of arrangement completely defies and invisibilizes intercommunal consensual relationships.

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- The India- Pakistan government came up with the Inter-Dominion treaty to recover the abducted women. To clarify what encompassed abduction, 1st March 1947 was decided to be the date after which any woman seen to be living with or in a relationship with a man of any other religion was presumed as abducted or taken by force
- Even the marriages or conversions after this date would be considered forced. Urvashi Butalia writes, "No matter what the woman said, how much she protested, no matter that there was the 'odd' real relationship, the women had no choice in the matter"



You know, where two people from different communities are married by choice, that would also be seen as abduction. So, this is how the national, you know, the state apparatus, the state machinery worked and forcibly, in terms of... it coercively imposed certain notions of marriage and human relationships. So, even the marriages or conversions after this date would be considered as forced. Like I said,

So Urvashi Butalia writes, I quote, 'No matter what the woman said, how much she protested, no matter that there was this odd real relationship, the women had no choice in the matter,' unquote. So even if there was this odd real relationship where the woman was not an abducted person, but actually left with a man by choice, you know, eloped with a man and married him by choice, such instances would not be taken into consideration by both the nations. Now, coming back to the movie, the movie portrays the abduction of several women during the partition, and Lajo is abducted from her caravan when she is walking towards India in the presence of her brother and her mother. Further, Puru meets a disheveled woman escaping her abductors, who she claims have raped her.

So, we have this figure of a mad woman. You know, and she has nothing on her body, she has no beauty, she is a malnourished female. But during these turmoils, these disturbed times, even a mad woman is raped. So, Puro herself is a victim of abduction, but out of familial enmity, this becomes her point of difference from Lajo, who is a partition abduction victim. So, the two cases are different.

While Puro had been initially picked up by Rashid and taken away, forcefully married and he forcefully cohabited with her. This all happened, these all happened as a result of familial enmity, the two families' rivalry, intergenerational rivalry. However, Lajo is a partition abduction victim. She was abducted from a kafila. So Lajo is accepted back in the family.

However, Puro, after escaping her abductor, Rashid, is sent back to him by the family. Even as she manages to come back to her parents, her parents do not take her back. So, a parent's refusal to accept her after the abduction suggests ways in which religiously informed identities would harden, would fossilize the barriers over the issues of women's honor and purity as well as the question of family's honor and purity. Puro and Hamida's refusal to succumb to the state policy of recovering abducted women in 1947 on the basis of the religious identification resonates with the attitude of all those women who resisted being recovered. So Puro's decision to stay back in Pakistan with Rashid, you know, and not come back to her, you know, original fold reflects the attitude of women who resisted being recovered,


and they legitimized their cross-religious relationships. Though her abduction predates partition, though her abduction actually happens before the partition, her resistance to her return and, you know, coming back to the fold of her natal family after partition makes a larger point about the attempts made by some women to secure citizenship. So, Puro or Hamida is symptomatic of such strong female voices who use their agency to secure citizenship through acting autonomously beyond and outside of religious community and state sanctioned decisions. They choose their own fate autonomously.

While reflecting on her abduction, a sense of resentment surged in Hamida's mind. So this is what Hamida thinks. 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 had become so accommodating.

Later, when her family wanted to take her back, this is what Hamida thought. Initially, they were not ready to take her back. Religion, family values—you know, all these things—were seen as obstacles. Now the same people are trying to be so accommodating.

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- While reflecting on her abduction, 'a sense of resentment surged in Hamida's mind. 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 had become so accommodating!' (Pritam 1987: 39)
- The abduction and rape of the women led them towards a hatred for their own bodies and a sense of 'defilement'
- The movie Pinjar ends with Pooru's statement that, "whether one is a Hindu girl or a Muslim one, whosoever reaches her destination, carries along my soul also"



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So, the abduction and rape of the women led them toward a hatred for their own bodies, and often there would be a constant sense of defilement. Manto, in this regard, you know, shows in his short story, 'The Dutiful Daughter,' how many women, after abduction, after rape, after the mutilation of their bodies, would resort to substance abuse. They would become alcoholics. And they would, you know, sometimes go to brothels because there was no way of coming back home to a normal life. They would, you know, take to vehement, abusive behavior.

They would become abusive, including self-abusive behavior or tendencies. All these anomalies in women's characters could be seen after violence occurred, was inflicted on them. So the movie Pinjar ends with Puru's statement that whether one is a Hindu girl or a Muslim one, whosoever reaches her destination carries along my soul also. So although she herself is not able to cross the border, she says that whoever can go back to their original fold, whoever is repatriated in the true sense,

carries along my soul also. With that girl, Puru goes back home. It is Puru's homecoming again and again. So, the work becomes a narrative that attempts to harmonize the communal differences instead of aggravating and further creating a gap through the narrative. So, the narrative does not really harp on Hindu-Muslim divide.

Pritam not only portrays the partition violence but gives an intricate insight of the regular rural life both before and during the partition, and how the daily lives of the commons, the common people transform in the process of partition. Communal trouble, women's abduction, rapes would also exist. They would still happen even before the partition violence. So, what partition changed or what changed with partition is the scale or the magnitude of these abductions. Although intercommunal, you know, hostility had always been there in a controlled way, in a controlled measure, that entire hatred kind of would blow up.

It blew up beyond proportion and became uncontrollable during the partition. There were mass rapes and abductions that could not be controlled. In a hushed manner, it would usually be swept under the carpet. The way Rashid and Puru's families deal with Puru's abduction by suppressing the issue and not accepting her back exposes the attitude toward abduction and rape, driven by feudal values, especially among aristocratic families. The well-reared and well-known families would usually not take back their daughters.


Rashid's family also attempts to keep the whole issue hidden, fearing communal violence because they have stolen a Hindu girl, they have taken a Hindu girl. They leave those

premises. They move on. I mean, after Puru's abduction, Rashid's family actually travels to their remote village. So, no one would know that Rashid has abducted a Hindu girl.

Further, they change Puru's Hindu name. Purinder is a Hindu Punjabi name. So, they change her name to Hamida. They tattoo her hand with the name Hamida, which is a Muslim name. So, partition becomes a reason to openly violate women without fear.

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- Abduction and rapes before partition occurred in a hushed manner, the way Rashid's and Pooru's families deal with her abduction through suppressing the issue and not accepting her back, which debunks the attitude towards abduction and rapes. Rashid's family as well attempts to keep the whole issue hidden, fearing communal violence
- Partition became a reason to openly violate women without fear. There was no more reason to carry out the heinous acts secretly, so thousands of women were victimized of rapes



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Now, with partition, the violation is upscaled. There was no more reason to carry out the heinous act secretly. So, the secrecy around abduction just went away, and thousands of women fell victim to men from the other community. Pinjar can be looked at as being loosely based on the Ramayana, where Puru, just like Sita, is abducted and waits for her husband, whose name is Ramchand.

However, they never get to meet in the story. They are parted forever. So, Ramchand's name appears to be intentionally given to the character to allude to the epic Ramayana. But this is a Ramayana differently written because Puru is not a very docile or meek, humble character. She is a very strong woman.

So, during the movie, at one point, Puru confirms the perspective of herself being Ramchand's Janki. She says at one point, 'I am Ramchand's Janki.' 'I'm waiting for my fiancé,' and she was supposed to get married to this man. We see later in the novel and in the film that Ramchand doesn't get married, and people often refer to his not getting married as his

The Ramayana Allusion in the Narrative

- Pinjar can be looked at as being loosely based on the Ramayana, where Pooru, like Sita, is abducted and waits for her Ram, here Ramchand, the name which appears to be intentionally given to the character to allude to the epic
- During the movie at one point Pooru confirms the perspective of herself being Ramchand's Jaanki (Sita), who she was supposed to get married to. Ramchand doesn't get married and people often refer to his not getting married as his 'Vanvaas' (exile)
- Pritam presents an alternative end to her representation of the epic when Pooru denies to return to Ramchand and chooses to live with Rashid



vanvas or exile. When Puru does not come back from Pakistan, Ramchand decides not to marry all his life and his friends see him as staying in a permanent exile or vanvas. So, Pritam presents an alternative end to her representation of, you know, Ramayan. It is almost a rewriting of Ramayan when Puru denies to return, come back to Ramchand and she chooses to live with Rashid in Pakistan.

In the end, her sister-in-law Lajo goes back to her brother Triloki. However, Puru decides to stay back with her abductor Rashid in Pakistan rather than return to her fiancé in India. In this way, she as though rewrites the story of Ramayana. She uses her agency, she uses her autonomy to rewrite her own life's epic and she partakes in authoring an event in her palimpsestic existence Her existence is almost like a palimpsest.

She is a layered fragmented identity, and she will remain like that always. So she becomes Rashid's wife Hamida and accepts the conditions that this name entails. And we see that Rashid in the end is a changed man. He is sore, guilty and squarely cognizant of his transgression,

and he acquiesces to her returning to Ramchand. Rashid agrees to Hamida's returning to Ramchand. However, as an individual who is more than only the tattooed name Hamida, Puro is not completely engulfed by her name Hamida. So, Puro does not completely give in or becomes Hamida. She remains as a third space, a fluid space, you know, a no man's land and she chooses to live in the world that Hamida has created for her, but she is not entirely engulfed by Hamida.

She is essentially a cracked up fragmented identity all her life. So, the conceptualization of identity is closely associated with Pinjar. Rashid's mother embeds a tattoo on Puru's hand early in the novel and in the film, naming her Hamida, thus compromising her identity.


Puru with a Hindu name that could cause a much disquiet in a Muslim majority society is overwritten by the newly tattooed name Hamida, which symbolizes some kind of status quo, some kind of cover up and camouflaging of her identity with her immediate surroundings. So like the rest of her body, which is beyond her control and which has to cohabit with, you know, Rashid now, which has to, which is impregnated by Rashid.

Her hand bears out her changed identity and witnesses her becoming visibly Muslim. Her hand, you know, bears out her changing of community, her conversion to a Muslim woman. So the tattoo is intended to forcefully seal Rashid's... forcefully seal off the process of her abduction and religious conversion through negating, through almost annulling, wiping away her past identity and relationships. The identity of Hamida, especially the way she herself uses it to disguise as a blanket seller,

in the later part of the story, allows her the freedom that would be unimaginable to either a Hindu betrothed woman or an abducted riot victim. So, Hamida is a name put on her hand through a tattoo. But the way Puru starts using her name, you know, and she disguises as a blanket seller to search for her sister-in-law. You know, she's searching the whereabouts of her sister-in-law from traveling from home to home. That kind of freedom, that kind of agency and even, you know, the bravery that it requires would be unimaginable for an upper caste Hindu woman

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- The identity of Hamida, especially the way she herself uses it to disguise as a blanket-seller, allows her the freedom that would be unimaginable to either a Hindu betrothed woman or an abducted riot victim
- Her figuration of Hamida is that of a poor Muslim woman who sells wares and is behaviorally not dictated by the strictures of the upper-class. She can enter an unfamiliar household, freely associate with unknown people and ultimately play the savior of another female victim
- After assuming the identity of Hamida, Pooru treats Rashid as an equal partner who supports her personal goal – a kind of man-woman relationship that she had earlier never experienced with any other male relative in the past



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or even an abducted riot victim. So she is neither. She has kind of carved out her own identity out of that adverse situation. Her figuration of Hamida is that of a poor Muslim woman who is selling wares and is behaviorally not dictated by the strictures of the upper class because she is a blanket seller. She can travel from home to home.

She can enter an unfamiliar terrain, an unfamiliar household, freely associate with unknown people and ultimately she can play the saviour of another female victim, in this case her sister-in-law Laju. After assuming the identity of Hamida, Puru treats Rashid as an equal partner who is going to support her personal goal. So we see that although initially Rashid is her abductor, later he is a changed man and he is more of an equal partner and a friend


Who supports her personal goal? Rashid helps her rescue her sister-in-law. So, a kind of man-woman relationship is seen, one she had never experienced with any other male relative in her past. Even her father and brother used to love her a lot. But there was this tinge of patriarchal values, you know, looming through these relationships. With Rashid, it becomes a very transformed, very equal kind of relationship later in the story.




Rashid helps Puru rescue another Hindu woman, Laju, from a Muslim household. So he is penitent; he is guilty. So we see that Rashid is penitent, he is guilty, and he is willing to do something as a way of making up for his past, amending his past wrongdoings. So, Puru uses her tattooed name, Hamida, to her own advantage for winning the confidence of the abductor's family. They take her for a Muslim woman, and that enables her to help her sister-in-law escape captivity.

This is an instance of Puru translating her body mark, the tattoo, into a site of power. That same tattoo, which was a site of oppression, of erasure of her past, of complete victimhood, later becomes a site of power and agency. So, Puru's tattoo is not etched on her body in normal times. It permanently defines her as a war prize. So, she is like a war prize.

Continued....

- Rashid also helps Pooru in rescuing another abducted Hindu woman from a Muslim household. This woman is Pooru's brother's wife. Pooru uses her tattooed name Hamida to her own advantage for winning the confidence of the abductor's family and helping her sister-in-law escape captivity. This is an instance of Pooru translating her body marking into a site of power
- Pooru's tattoo is not etched on her body in normal times; it permanently defines her as a war prize. Yet it also delineates a reverse journey for her, from being the figure of an outsider that inspires communal rivalry and sacrilege to becoming kin to her abductor's family and his immediate cosmos, which begins to trust and espouse her within the new space



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She is taken away from a Hindu home. And she's defined with... another redefined with another name on her hand. Yet the tattoo also delineates a reverse journey for her, from

being an outsider in the Muslim community that inspires communal rivalry to becoming akin to her abductor's family. And so the Hamida name, you know, makes her more easily, you know, transition her victimhood and become a kin in the abductor's family. She is able to fit into the immediate cosmos of Rashid's family and surroundings, and they begin to trust her and embrace her within the new space owing to this name Hamida.

So, Hamida becomes a new reality while the partially raised ghost of Puru keeps coming back to haunt her, Hamida, now and then. So, she can never entirely become Hamida or Hamida cannot just engulf her entirely. Puru comes back to haunt her again and again. So, even after being forced to marry Rashid, Puru fantasizes her marriage with Ramchand.


It comes back to her mind. It occurs to her. What would happen if she married Ramchand? She fancies, you know, getting married to Ramchand. So there is a clear tension between these two identities when, you know, Puru's brother,

Triloki, as a way of taking revenge on Rashid, sets his crops on fire. So, Triloki, Puru's brother, is setting fire to Rashid's crops. But who is that affecting? That is not doing any good to Puru. It is actually affecting Hamida's household.

So, because of Triloki's rash action, Hamida's household suffers because Puru is not only Triloki's sister but also Rashid's wife by then. So, if Rashid's crops are burned, Hamida's household suffers. This instance actually shows the cracked identity, the fragmentation within the same person. She is a fragmented self, where the ghost of Puru comes back to haunt Hamida.

Continued....

- Hamida becomes the new reality while the partially razed ghost of Pooru keeps coming back to haunt the former now and then. Even after being forced to marry Rasheed, Pooru fantasizes her marriage with Ramchand
- There is a clear tension between her two identities when Pooru's brother, as a way of avenging Rashid's crime sets fire to his crops, but Hamida's household suffers the consequences of this rash action
- This is a common moment in the post-Partition period, when hostility between two men from enemy communities centering a woman imperils the latter. By rescuing her sister-in-law, Hamida/Pooru spares her the painful fractured existence like herself



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So, this is a common moment in the post-partition period. This kind of situation resonates with some common moments in the post-partition period when hostility between two men from enemy communities, centering on women, would imperil none other than the woman

herself. So, when two men would fight, the sufferer would be a woman, as we see in this case. So, by rescuing her sister-in-law, Puru spares her the painful, fractured existence like her own. So, Puru does not want Lajo to undergo the same kind of palimpsestic, broken identity that she has assumed for the rest of her life.

So she sends back Lajo to her original fold. I would like to stop my lecture here today. Let's meet in our next lecture for a new topic and a new set of discussions and analysis. Thank you.

Continued....

- Hamida becomes the new reality while the partially razed ghost of Pooru keeps coming back to haunt the former now and then. Even after being forced to marry Rasheed, Pooru fantasizes her marriage with Ramchand
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