



Portrayal Of Desires Of Women In Amrita Pritam's Short Stories: 'Stench Of Kerosene' And 'The Weed'

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Abstract: Amrita Pritam's works embody portrayal of women who are either in dilemma or navigating quagmired circumstances in their relationships. Through various characters we get an insight into the lives of women of that era where most of these characters were tackling and grappling from the perils of partition. Each of these works resonate with Pritam's own desires, aspirations and yearnings which were at stake and unfulfilled due to societal expectations and cultural norms that were prevalent back then. Guleri's character from 'Stench of Kerosene' depicts how society always had a rulebook for women which enumerated traits of a good women but failed to safeguard women who were exploited by the same society which had barged lofty rules for them.

Angoori is another character of Amrita Pritam from the short story 'The Weed' which perpetually questions the desires, aspirations and yearnings of women which were at stake and remained unfulfilled due to societal expectations and cultural norms. Pritam identifies the misogyny and sexism prevalent in the time and outlines and sums up the lives of women who were uneducated, dependent and commodified.

Keywords: Commodification, Misogyny, Sexism, Confinement, Vicious.

Amrita Pritam's works embody portrayal of women who are either in dilemma or navigating quagmired circumstances in their relationships. Through various characters we get an insight into the lives of women of that era where most of these characters were tackling and grappling from the perils of partition. Each of these works resonate with Pritam's own desires, aspirations and yearnings which were at stake and unfulfilled due to societal expectations and cultural norms that were prevalent back then. Guleri's character from 'Stench of Kerosene' depicts how society always had a rulebook for women which enumerated traits of a good women but failed to safeguard women who were exploited by the same society which had barged lofty rules for them.

Manak, Guleri's husband knows what his mother has planned when Guleri will go for her annual meet to her maternal house, but remains silent and perturbed and never discloses to her, but towards the end it reflects how a woman was only considered of significance to a man whether she could bear children to him every year and if they could not then they were exchanged like commodities in first place.

Amrita Pritam Dryly and Poignantly portrays "this Manak and Guleri had been married seven years, but she had never borne a child and Manak's mother had made a secret resolve: "I will not let it go beyond the eighth year this year, true to her decision, she had paid Rs 500 to get him a second wife".

Pritam's piercing tone accentuates the earnestness of the commodification of a women and how a woman's life is only worth a few rupees, which could be bought and sold if she fails to provide and fulfill the childbearing capabilities.

Angoori another character of Amrita Pritam from the short story 'The Weed' questions the desire, passion, longings and aspirations of women. Angoori's character is told to consider reading and education for a woman as a sin. How society feels menaced and threatened by an opinionated woman is highlighted in the story when she says that "a woman's body is like a lump of dough some have the clinging plasticity of leavened dough, rarely has a woman a body that can be equalled to rightly done dough that is a baker's pride". These lines rather piercingly and somberly touches upon how the patriarchy and misogyny has reigned and manipulated the society into deceiving and refusing women their basic rights.

Angoori assumes it as a curse when a woman chooses her own partner without her parents consent. When she herself falls in love and agrees to the myth of weed as if Ram Tara had made her fall in love with him by mixing 'The Weed' in her tea, it rather

perpetuates a vicious confinement of women who are denied of basic right of choosing the partner with whom she wishes to spend her life with.

Both the stories delineate how women were devoid of power and authority in the society back then. Pritam identifies the misogyny and sexism prevalent in the time and outlines and sums up the lives of women who were uneducated, dependent and commodified.

