

# Fetishization Of Women By Male Characters In Amrita Pritam's Short Stories: 'Chammak Challo' And 'Karma Wali'

Anjali Sharma

Assistant Professor

Sophia Girl's Collage, Ajmer

**Abstract:** Amrita Pritam's works encapsulate the essence of the bygone era of partition and the massacre which led to upheaval and disruption in the lives of numerous people who passed on the tales of partition and its horrors to the forthcoming generations. Amrita Pritam's quintessential work 'A Slice of Life' narrates many such tales amongst which 'Chammak Challo' extends and distinguishes itself in the treatment of wealth and women.

The male Characters in both the stories are portrayed as shadows which are manipulating women and their identity. Hukamchand as a father fails explicitly when he burdens Challo with the responsibility of their livelihood. Ratna her beloved shows empathy and tries to protect her from the men at the bus station but his own financial limitations as a newspaper seller shackles him. When Challo fulfills her duty as a daughter it is marked by a huge cost that she has to pay as a woman and as a daughter as after getting raped by a man she is given ten rupees as a price or cost of having her without her consent when she buys groceries for a ravishing meal, she is depicted deadly, benumbed and indifferent to her surroundings while the reality of her life changes forever her doors get closed for love in her mind as she is no more shown besotted for her beloved Ratna. The condition of refugee women in the post partition era are insinuated in both the stories by the dilapidated reality of their dreams and desires as "careworn Woman".

Both the women Challo and Karma Wali are shown as sole bread earners of the family who are exposed to the patriarchal world rather brutally and taste the bitter truth of life at such tender age. However Challo's fate remains open ended in the story as she is shown sinking in the chasm and bog of cruel reality which struck her with tons of bricks while Karma Wali is seen navigating through the ravine bluntly accepting who she is with confidence. Both are plunged into extremities and are exploited by men who mean them most but one comes unscathed while the other gets benumbed and drowns with the burdens of realities.

**Keywords:** Indifferent, Realities, Chasm, Extremities, Miserable.

Amrita Pritam's works encapsulate the essence of the bygone era of partition and the massacre which led to upheaval and disruption in the lives of numerous people who passed on the tales of partition and its horrors to the forthcoming generations. Amrita Pritam's quintessential work 'A Slice of Life' narrates many such tales amongst which 'Chammak Challo' extends and distinguishes itself in the treatment of wealth and women.

Hukumchand's character begins in the story with a wealthy man who marries a young woman named Kartaro after his wife's death. The wealth and opulence of the man is the reason why the young woman Kartaro was lured and plunged in the marriage with an older man. Later when they migrate to east Punjab after partition the affluence and abundance fades away turning them from riches to rags. Kartaro's bitterness towards Hukumchand and his daughter Challo peaks and turns their condition miserable.

Although Challo is the only daughter of Hukumchand still the dynamics of the father daughter relationship changes and once most precious and beloved daughter now becomes the sole breadwinner of the family. Kartaro's pungent and embittered remarks on Challo's basket selling skills depicts the disgruntled status quo of their family.

Kartaro calls Challo's poker faced expression while selling the basket reason of their poverty. She calls her as 'Lota faced' which is deliberately an attempt by Challo to not invite any unwanted attention towards her but Kartaro and Hukumchand's perpetual coaxing and persuading to Challo to be more animated and cajoling highlights the severity and exorbitant adversity and misfortune after partition.

The male Characters in both the stories are portrayed as shadows which are manipulating women and their identity. Hukamchand as a father fails explicitly when he burdens Challo with the responsibility of their livelihood. Ratna her beloved shows empathy and tries to protect her from the men at the bus station but his own financial limitations as a newspaper seller shackles him. When Challo fulfills her duty as a daughter it is marked by a huge cost that she has to pay as a woman and as a daughter as after getting raped by a man she is given ten rupees as a price or cost of having

her without her consent when she buys groceries for a ravishing meal, she is depicted deadly, benumbed and indifferent to her surroundings while the reality of her life changes forever her doors get closed for love in her mind as she is no more shown besotted for her beloved Ratna. The condition of refugee women in the post partition era are insinuated in both the stories by the dilapidated reality of their dreams and desires as “careworn Woman”.

‘Karma Wali’ is a name which means ‘the fortunate one’ but the shallowness of her fortune and betrayal of her family and husband reflect more into the name and the name itself seems as a mockery of her life. As her husband favors his beloved over his wife and continues to treat wife as a stranger while the other woman as his wife. The relatives of her husband justify his deeds and further prove her as a failure completely as she remains unwanted, undesirable and unsought. The story doesn’t actively show her husband but the anecdotes shared by Karma Wali sketch him as a man who is jaded and nonchalant towards her. Both the stories illustrate men who are keeping up with the protagonists either for material or physical needs but end up turning indifferent and blasé towards them creating a void in their personalities and reflecting Amrita Pritam’s own married and love life as a longing for true and platonic love which can immerse a woman with compassion and fill her abyss with love.

Both the women Challo and Karma Wali are shown as sole bread earners of the family who are exposed to the patriarchal world rather brutally and taste the bitter truth of life at such tender age. However Challo’s fate remains open ended in the story as she is shown sinking in the chasm and bog of cruel reality which struck her with tons of bricks while Karma Wali is seen navigating through the ravine bluntly accepting who she is with confidence. Both are plunged into extremities and are exploited by men who mean them most but one comes unscathed while the other gets benumbed and drowns with the burdens of realities.

