

**Examining violence against women during partition, and female authors’
futuristic secular thoughts.**

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor
of Arts degree in English Literature**

By

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SATHYABAMA

INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

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BONAFIDE CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this Project Report is the bonafide work of **GANGOTHRI L (40010006)** who carried out the project entitled "**Examining violence against women during partition, and female authors' futuristic secular thoughts**" under my/our supervision from November 2022 to May 2023.

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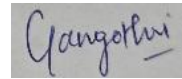
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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The current study unveils violence faced by women during partition, and female authors' futuristic civilizing thoughts. The research is about the violence and trauma against women during the partition. It also brings out the authors' futuristic advanced thoughts which emphasizes that they were far ahead of their time in thinking. It is important to study the partition stories from women's perspective as it has more scope to explore and reveals the harsh cruelty of partition towards women. Research focuses on gendered violence, double colonization of women, a sense of lack of identity, and secular thoughts of the female protagonist of the story. This research studies both perspectives - victims of 1) violence (Pinjar), and 2) societal norms (sunlight on a broken column).

Pinjar by Amrita Pritam deals with the extreme violence and threats faced by women. The concepts of honor killing, rape, self-immolation, house arrest, abduction, abandonment, and many other impacts and side effects are veiled in the novel. Whereas, Sunlight on a Broken Column is a semi-autobiographical novel written by Attia Hosain. It emphasizes on societal norms, patriarchal thoughts, and restrictions in the day-to-day life of a girl. Female characters in both novels are being examined to explore post-colonial feminism in partition literature.

Other than post-colonial feminism, this research also deals with the secularist vision of novelists to justify their religious and gender-unbiased approaches.

KEYWORDS: rape, house arrest, mental instability, domestic violence, threats, abduction, familial structures, relationships and restrictions privilege, patriarchy, personal freedom, freedom of thoughts and actions.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 AN OVERVIEW

This research deals with the position of women during the era of independence. It explores the reasons for the subjugation of women by their families and society. To know more about women during and after the freedom struggle, it is important to know why and how women are being treated in society. It is necessary to study and understand the concept of womanhood, what are the factors that determine the current definition of womanhood which is prevailing in society, and why do women face restrictions both economically and socially? What are the cultural practices that restrain women from being themselves, and to what extent it affects women both physically and mentally?

1.2 INTRODUCTION

“History is not the past but a map of the past, drawn from a particular point of, to be useful to the modern traveller.” these words by *Henry Glassie*, a historian, are more suitable to explain the present concept of womanhood. One must go through the evolution of womanhood from past to present in order to acknowledge and accept this concept.

1.2.1 Indus valley civilization

Beginning with the Indus Valley civilization, women played a vital role in both government and household work. The matriarch of the family was considered as the head of the family. During this era, women in the family enjoyed exclusive superiority, higher status, and more respect, and their rights were valued.

1.2.2 Early Vedic Period:

Then in the Early Vedic period, the patriarch became the head of the family and the society became the patriarchal one. Though superiority was with men, women were allowed to educate, recited poems, and took care of families and other responsibilities in the absence of their husbands or other male head of the family. They were allowed to choose their spouse with the help of the “swayamvar” event which was conducted to choose a husband.

1.2.3 Later and Post Vedic period:

Women slowly were deprived of their status, considered not necessary for the political developments of the region, and they were not allowed to economic developments for their own families. Society started sowing seeds of evil practices such as Sati, Child Marriage, Female-Foeticide, Infanticide, polygamy, etc. But in contrast, it was also time for social reformers from Chanakya, Adi Shankaracharya, Kabir, Akbar, and Chaithanya to Ramdas. This period also had important women leaders who became popular by getting rid of evil practices and worshipping god, as women were restricted from going out and remained homemakers. Such women inspired many other social reformers. Some examples are Mira Bai, Janabai, Andal, Karaikkal Ammaiyar etc.

1.2.4 British Era:

Britishers entered India as traders who had the right of trading in India from Queen Elizabeth I. From then until 1765 they were dealing with marketing, purchasing, and selling goods in India. Company rule started in India in 1765 and India was under East India Company rule until 1858. The crown rule was established in 1858 after the wake of the Sepoy Mutiny. During the British Era, many evil Practices such as child marriage, and female infanticide including sati were debarred in Indian society. Widow re-marriage was encouraged and legalized by Britishers in India. These steps towards women's empowerment by British Government though appear commendable, the real heroes behind the social reforms were Indians. Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Basava, B.R. Ambedkar, and many other famous personalities not only inspired people to struggle for freedom but supported social reforms at a large scale and fought for women's empowerment.

1.3 Partition:

The term 'Partition' is the action of splitting or dividing the country into parts. The birth of two nations took place as a result of partition. British India was divided into India and Pakistan. Independence along with partition resulted in large-scale communal violence spreading across the borders. People were uprooted from their houses, and displaced in the name of partition which questioned their sense of belongingness. They were ill-treated, and

treated as strangers in their home country. Many became refugees in the country where they were born and raised in. Few prescient businessmen and other wealthy persons sold their properties in advance and migrated. But the majority were displaced with little more than the clothes they wore leaving their houses, properties, relatives, friends, and memories behind.

It is considered the most deleterious, tragic transfer of people that human history had ever witnessed. Apart from communal violence, people were struggling with poverty, problems of rehabilitation, hunger, etc. The most affected areas due to partition were Punjab, Bengal, Delhi, Gujarat, Bihar, Sindh, Jammu, and Kashmir, and Princely states such as Hyderabad, Junagadh, etc. Many chronicles, memoirs, biographies, autobiographies, novels, short stories, and poems included about partition which are safeguarded in libraries globally. Fictional novels which incorporate women's trouble are being studied for this research.

1.3.1 Reasons for partition:

Much of the strength of the "Great Revolt of 1857" laid in Hindu-Muslim unity. Indian sub-continent has always been known for its mixture of religions, culturally rich places, and communal harmony. People belonging to different religions and cultural groups lived together. Kings and their officials such as Akbar, Tipu Sultan, and Haider Ali remained an inspiration for many who supported peace and communal harmony. People were living in harmony, supported each other, and loved their brothers and sisters from other regions and religions. Inter-caste, inter-religion marriages were accepted.

There was cooperation among the Hindus and Muslims, soldiers and leaders. Both religions respected each other's sentiments. Rebels and sepoys chose Bahadur Shah 'a Muslim king' as their leader for the revolt. Orders were immediately passed to ban cow-slaughter as a token of respect for Hindus in revolt successful areas. People from both religions were equally represented at all levels of the leadership.

The role of Hindu-Muslim unity in the revolt was indirectly acknowledged later by Aitchison, a senior British official when he bitterly complained:

In this instance we could not play off Mohammedans against the Hindus.

Hence it is evident that the people of India were not interested in communal violence and fights in medieval times especially before 1857.

Though Indians proved their unity during the 'Great Revolt of 1857', partition was inevitable. This was because of the "divide and rule" policy adopted by the British Government. Several political developments and the Radcliff Commission which was constituted to solve the problem of demarcation of boundaries also lead to this deadliest partition.

Corrupt policies such as divide and rule were executed by the British government to smash the unity among the people. The British conquered India by taking advantage of the disunity among the Indian power and by playing them against one another. After 1858 they continued to follow this policy of divide and rule by turning the princes against the people, province against province, caste against caste, group against group, and, above all, Hindus against Muslims and vice versa.

In fact, Charles Wood, Secretary of State for India, wrote to the Viceroy Canning in 1861:

I never wish to see again a great army, very much the same in its feelings and prejudices and connections, confident in its strength, and so disposed to rise in rebellion together. If one regiment mutinies, I should like to have the next regiment so alien that it would be ready to fire into it.

Some other reasons which triggered partitions were discrimination based on caste, color, religion, and region by British people. This discrimination was continued in the recruitment process for Government jobs. The branch of the army faced extreme domination by Europeans. They had key geographical and military positions. Departments such as Police, Telegraphs, Public works, Medicine, Railways, Posts, Customs, Forests, Engineering, and many other highly paid and crucial jobs were restrained for British citizens. People were recruited based on their religion, especially in the army which directly discriminated against other religions. Many became victims of such clever play. Sayyid Ahmed Khan, who inspired many as a great educationist and social reformer became the victim of such manipulative clever play and embraced conservatism towards the end of his life.

People of any religion who belonged to fewer populations or minorities of particular regions were supported by Britishers in the name of holding up their community sentiments. They cleverly used jobs as their weapon to split Hindu-Muslim unity which lead to competition among 'educated Indians' as they suffered commercial backwardness. Communal, caste, tribal and regional loyalties were encouraged among soldiers so that the sentiment of nationalism would not grow among them. Traditional and ascetic persons were hailed against educated

Indians. Landlords, zamindars, and other rich people were manipulated against peasants who faced both poverty and the heavy burden of the tax.

At this point, many communalists sensed that Hindus and Muslims cannot have common interests, and cannot maintain communal harmony and thus they are obligated and destined to live separately as forming two different nations.

As a result, Muslim League proposed the 'two nation theory'. Radcliff who was given the task to demarcate the boundaries had no specialized knowledge about demarcation, no prior knowledge about India's diversity, and no advisors and experts. Radcliff's commission had two members from Muslim League and two members from Indian National Congress. There was a deadlock between Congress and Muslim League. The outcome was to demarcate the boundaries on the religious basis. In the end, two major Muslim concentrated areas Punjab and Bengal were divided from India and declared as West Pakistan and East Pakistan respectively. Pakistan celebrated its freedom day on 14 August 1947, whereas, India celebrated its Independence Day on 15 August 1947.

1.3.2 Partition Literature

Partition literature is a nuanced depiction of the tragedy of Partition, a period in India's history that is very hard to make sense of. It is an amalgamation of history, conflict studies, border studies, and politics. The multi-layered dynamics of the Partition of India, not only the political but also its metaphoric and symbolic relevance and ramifications, are remembered and revisited from multiple angles in Partition literature.

The literary portrayal of the Partition of India brings into the limelight the plurality of human experiences. It also contests the arbitrariness of a nation and explores in-depth issues of class, gender, religion, ostracization, and the meaning of existence.

Partition Literature brings out the trauma of unraised and unsung voices. It brings out the elements of violence, it dramatizes the various concepts of brutality, the cruelty that happened during partition.

It reveals the horror side of the partition which history books will expose less. It includes fiction, non-fiction, poems, articles, etc. which can be explored. The multi-layered approach can be taken toward partition literature to explore themes such as post-colonialism,

post-colonial feminism, gender, religion, secularism, culture, etc. It also reveals the trauma of people of both countries through fictional stories.

A well-renowned Indian author, a Padma Vibushan (a second–highest civilian award of India) awardee, Kushwant Singh in his partition novel *Train to Pakistan*, delineates the horrors faced by the people of India and Pakistan.

This novel is a combination of fictional stories, histories, terrors, and many other threats. The story is about a fictional village Mano Majra, where Sikhs and Muslims live predominantly. Though busy with their work they live peacefully like brothers, unaware of the proper meaning of partition. But a train from Pakistan with more than 1000 dead bodies swapped their peace into distrust among each other. Those, who were living like brothers, those Muslims in the village, who had nothing to do with partition were made to flee to refugee camps which were taking them to Pakistan. Local politics, rumors from the outskirts of the village, and the unexpected trauma of people who witnessed a train full of dead bodies clearly explain the atmosphere of the village.

This novel audibly spells out the bewildered circumstances and exploitation of people both mentally and physically. It intelligibly explains both social and individual elements of society during the partition. The gradual process of conversion of love into hate is depicted in the story. He clearly explained the situation of people, and the hesitation among people to believe in each other's communities.

1.3.3 Impact of Partition on Women

Violence against women was at its peak. They were targeted both by their families and others. A number of sacrifices were done by women either forcefully or on their own to escape the violence. Women were not safe even at the hands of their own families as they were being killed by their own family members. Women became the primary target, they were abducted, raped, killed, and sacrificed for the sake of so-called honor.

During the Partition of India, violence against women was an extensive situation. It is estimated that during the partition between 75,000 and 100,000 women were kidnapped and raped. The rape of women by males during this period is well documented, with women also being complicit in these attacks. Between December 1947 and December 1949, 6000 females were recovered from Pakistan and 12,000 from India. Most recoveries were made, in order of succession, from East and West Punjab, Jammu, Kashmir, and Patiala. Over the eight-year

period, 30,000 women had been repatriated by both governments. The number of Muslim women recovered was significantly higher; 20,728 against 9,032 non-Muslim women. Most recoveries were made in the period between 1947 and 1952. Although some recoveries were made as late as 1956.

The adventures of freedom struggle recorded in the history books were not interpreted from women's viewpoint. It would have been completely different if the history was explored from a women's perspective. Unfortunately, history, epics, and non-fictional story cover only men's superiority, their sacrifices, wars, crimes, etc. Women are manifested as either goddesses or emotional and loving mothers, or as a housewife in novels and epics. Only those women are adored who carry out and fulfill their roles as mothers and housewives in both stories and in real. Partition literature explored the hidden and unvisited stories of partition.

Kushwant Singh in his book *Train to Pakistan* clearly manifested the conditions of women, and how they were stimulated by their own family members to protect their chastity, honor, and character by self-immolation. In this novel, Sikh refugees suggested women of their community jump into wells and burn themselves rather than fall into the hands of Muslims. Many women who did not self-immolate themselves were abducted, raped in public, paraded naked in the streets, and then murdered.

In Amritsar, Sikhs paraded naked Muslim women, they were then publicly raped before being set fire to in the street. Though partition literature deals with fictional stories, the emotions of the novels are so true. These novels are those facts, emotions, and incidents with fictional characters, which history books failed to interpret. Muslim women who faced such humiliation and pain were the real-time characters of fictional novels.

Similar kinds of torture and suffering were equally faced by women belonging to Hindu and Sikh communities. It is evident that women of all communities were targeted by male chauvinists. Women were being victimized in all spheres of their life including their homes. Communal riots in Calcutta, kidnapping of Hindu women in Noakhali, anti-women violence during 1946 massacres of Muslims in Bihar.

Muslim women in Bihar committed suicide by jumping into wells. In November 1946, Muslim women were subjected to stripping, nude processions, and rape by Hindu mobs in the town of Garhmukteshwar. Systematic violence against women in Rawalpindi against women by Muslim mobs, forcible conversions of women from all the communities, kidnapping of children,

and abduction of women were taking place. All these are the outcomes of patriarchal thoughts, and hatred among people for each other's community which were implanted by British people as a part of their "Divide and Rule" policy to extract as much as possible benefits from India. Women were merely recognized as sexual objects, an object for those so-called brave men to attack.

A number of villagers were wiped out from their own villages in the name of religion. These incidents, and struggles of those villagers are similar to events of the fictional village Mano Majra in *Train to Pakistan* by Kushwant Singh.

In fact, women were doubly colonized during the freedom struggle. Double colonization is a term referring to the status of women in the postcolonial world. Postcolonial and feminist theorists state that women are oppressed by both patriarchy and colonial power.

1.4 Hypothesis

This study aims at a critical and analytical approach to partition literature in post-colonial feminism. The blend of records, historic facts, events, and partition traumas along with fictional characters and events in the novel written by different authors is evaluated in this research. This research hypothesizes that women were the most affected irrespective of their religion during the partition. Partition novels are being considered which cleverly mirrored the status of women during partition.

1.5 Research Statement

The aim of this thesis is to reinterpret partition history in post-colonial feminist view. The research statement of this study is evaluating the partition novels within the focus of gender studies. This research will have a theoretical approach towards partition novels. This research highlights women as sufferers for a long time and adds women's point of view to existing literature. This study premeditates gender studies of partition literature irrespective of their religion, region, caste, color, race, etc.

1.6 This research provides answers to the following questions:

- What impact does partition violence have in contemporary society, especially on women? Does this affect even us today?

- ▶ In what ways partition was used as a reason to target women? Was partition just an excuse to attack women?
- ▶ It provides answers to questions about whether women were targeted because they belong to one particular religion or just because they were women.
- ▶ It explores the religious sentiments of society which are deeply rooted and provokes men to attack each other's community.
- ▶ It examines how the actions of hooligans triggered communists who further provoked normal people to commit violence.
- ▶ It also explores the secularist thoughts of novelist

It also examines how our female authors were far-sighted in their thoughts despite facing strong patriarchal restrictions in society.

1.7 Research objective

The current study aims at the selected partition novels exploring different aspects of post-colonial feminism including

Gendered studies

Communal violence

Double colonization

Spivak's Subaltern theory

Pinjar - Rape, abductions, identity change, mental instability, threats, domestic violence, house arrest.

Sunlight on a Broken Column - Patriarchal Norms, familial structure, men's Privilege, relationships, Restrictions, personal freedom, freedom of thoughts, freedom of action.

Women characters in the novels are examined along with the story of the novels to justify the women's victimization during the Post-colonial era. As post-colonial feminism is an analytical concept, theoretical and critical analysis is being approached in this thesis to prove the subjugation of women in the colonial era.

The objective of the research is to hunt for the reasons that victimized women still haunt them. This research explores two different novelists under one canonical theme of gendered studies. With the help of this study, it is easy to figure out the intensity of brutality towards women during partition.

Both novelists belong to the post-colonial era. Therefore considering violence in their work would be sensible and more suitable. She also expressed the mental instability of women during and aftermath of partition.

1.8 Justification for the selected novels

1.1 Table of list of the novels and authors

S.No.	Partition Literature Novel	Name of the Author
1.	Pinjar (1950)	Amrita Pritam
2.	Sunlight on a Broken Column (Year)	Attia Hosain

The importance of selecting these novels for the thesis is that only a little gender-centric research has been conducted on these novels. Secondly, the selected novelists were not religious and gender biased, rather they focused more on exposing brutality towards women in the novels. Thirdly, these novels highlight how women of any community were targeted to humiliate their religion.

1.9 Theoretical Analysis and Research Methodology

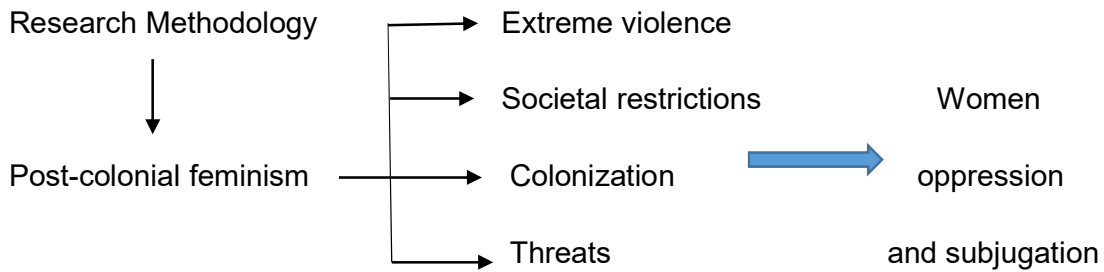
Critical and theoretical analysis has been approached to study the theory of post-colonial feminism in selected novels. The portrayal of women in colonial and post-colonial literature is being explored.

1.9.1 Research Methodology.

- Partition novels are considered prime sources where one can easily focus on the feministic approach of the post-colonial era which clearly depicts about traumas and sacrifices of women in post-independence society.

- Along with novels, this research also includes facts and records of history to account for the explanation of the feministic approach.
- The combination of the history with the theories of post-colonial feminism is being premeditated for this study.

This study is reasonable as it explores the causes of women's victimization during the freedom and post-freedom period.



CHAPTER 2

PINJAR (1950)

BY AMRITA PRITAM

2.1 AN OVERVIEW

This chapter deals with challenges faced by women during the partition. The concepts of honor killing, rape, self-immolation, house arrest, abduction, abandonment, and many other impacts and side effects are depicted in the novel.

Female characters – Pooro, Lajo, Kammo, insane woman, taro, unknown girls.

Concepts being explored – rape, house arrest, mental instability, domestic violence, threats, abduction.

2.2 ABOUT AUTHOR

Amrita Pritam is the winner of India's most prestigious literary award "Bharatiya Jnanpith". She is also the recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award (1956), Padma Shri (1969), Shatabdi Samman (2000), and Padma Vibushan (2004). She is well known for her works related to partition literature.

Pinjar is a novel originally written by her in Punjabi which is about the female protagonist of the story named Pooro, and the problems she faces. It was later translated by Khushwant Singh as "The Skeleton" in 2009. Novel recognized almost all kinds of struggles faced by women both in day-to-day life and during partition. It brings out all types of emotions associated with the struggles.

She intelligibly brings out the transformation of Pooro to Hamida. The sense of belongingness and the state of confusion within Pooro during the transformation exposed by Pritam is extremely commendable. This unveils the fight of women towards strict and rigid societal norms. Also, the character Pooro represents all those women during the partition who went through the transformation of their identity, character, religion, etc. when they were abandoned by their own family members after being abducted, and raped by men.

She brought to light almost all types of violence towards women in this novel. Sacrifices and sufferings of women are portrayed. Not only the character of Pooro, but few other characters in the novel also expose the pain of women, they are Lajo, Kammo, the madwoman, Taro, and some other young girls. Her Choice of words in this novel effectively conveys the emotions of the characters, allowing readers to relate to their experiences.

2.3 ODE TO WARIS SHAH:

*Today I call Waris Shah,
“Speak from your grave”
And turn today,
the book of love’ next affectionate page

once, a daughter of Punjab cried
and you wrote a wailing saga
Today a million daughters, cry to you,
Waris Shah Rise!

O’ narrator of the grieving; rise!
Look at you Punjab today,
Fields are lined with corpses,
and blood fills the Chenab (ix)*

Ode written by Amrita Pritam to Waris Shah laments about Partition and especially the holocaustic experiences faced by women.

Female characters of the novel are being examined to justify the victimization of women during and post-colonial era.

2.4 ANALYSIS OF FEMALE CHARACTERS OF THE NOVEL:

Spivak's subaltern theory is more suitable for the girls in this novel. Subaltern refers to the most marginalized group of society. According to her subalterns only receive orders rather than giving. They belong to a voiceless community in society.

Spivak considers females as subalterns because of evil practices they follow without any denial such as sati or widow immolation, dowries, and domestic violence. Hence they live under a life of dictatorship.

2.4.1 Pooro (protagonist):

The plot is about the abduction of Pooro, a Hindu girl by a Muslim boy Rashida.

A few days before the abduction of Pooro, preparations for her marriage were taking place in her home. By that time she was engaged to Ram Chand in the nearby village of Rattowal. She often dreams of wearing a red veil, and bangles, getting ready, and going in a palanquin to her in-law's home after getting married. But one day she was kidnapped by Rashida who wants to avenge the old enmity of his family, towards her family. Then she was brought to the forlorn house of enemies, where she was taken care of by him.

She was informed about the old enmity by Rashida that his aunt was abducted by one of the male members of Pooro's family, kept for three nights and she was abandoned by Pooro's family members.

His agents used foul language towards our womenfolk, and your uncle kept my father's sister in his house for three nights – with the knowledge of your grandfather!

(17)

My grandfather made my uncles swear that they would avenge these insults.

(17)

The use of foul language towards women to dishonor them and spend nights with women of other communities to humiliate them is highlighted in the novel. This triggers Rashida and his family to abduct Pooro to humiliate her family.

Those were times when Muslims were humiliated a lot. It's now Shaikhs turn to avenge Pooro's family.

The Shaikhs were then like a bundle of sugarcane from which all the juice had been squeezed out. They wept bitter tears of blood and bided their time.

(17)

Above mentioned lines express how Muslims were targeted by Hindus and vice-versa.

"Rashida, have pity on me! Take me back to my people!" Pooro clasped his feet.

(15)

If my uncle abducted your aunt, what was the fault of mine? You have reduced me to a homeless vagrant.

(18)

The emotions of abducted women are conveyed in the novel through Pooro. With the help of Pooro novelist highlights the trauma and the conflicting thoughts of abducted women.

Pooro cleverly escaped from that forlorn house. She ran away to her parents with the hope that she will be accepted by her family. But unfortunately, she was abandoned by her own family for the sake of honor and was rejected in order to protect her brothers and other male members of the family from the Shaikhs of Chatto village.

"The neighbors will hear. There will be a crowd", warned her father. Pooro's mother stuffed her mouth with the hem of her shirt.

"Daughter, this fate was ordained for you, we are helpless."

"The shaikhs will descend on us and destroy everything we have."

Take me to Thailand with you! Cried Pooro

“Who will marry you now? You have lost your religion and your birthright. If we dare to help you, we will be wiped out without trace of blood left behind to tell our fate.”

(22)

Then destroy me with your own hands.

Daughter, it would have been better if you had died at birth! (23)

Pooro's father abandoned her to save his family and especially his sons. She pleaded with her father to take her along with him, but unfortunately, she was abandoned by her father. She wished for her own destruction but she couldn't make it.

Then Rashida accepted her. He took her along with him and got married to her.

Pooro felt like a stray calf in a strange herd of cows. (25)

She accepted her fate. A few days later her name was changed from Pooro to Hamida.

It was a double life: Hamida by day, Pooro by night. In reality, she was neither one nor the other, she was just a skeleton, without a shape or a name.

(25)

She remained busy with her household work while she was craving her family's love. Especially her mother's love about whom she always thought about while working. She gave birth to a baby boy, whom she loved a lot as she was away from her family. Her sense of loneliness converted into happiness as she had someone whom she can call her family. She also realized Rashida's love for her. She also adopted the son of a madwoman and cared for him.

The story ends with announcements from the governments of both countries to rehabilitate the abducted women and men as some families were ready to accept their abducted members. Pooro was also asked by her brother to join her family members who moved to divided India by that time. But she refused and decided to stay with her husband and children in Pakistan.

2.4.2 Kammo:

Kammo, a twelve-year-old girl works hard for her aunt who always threatens her. As soon as her mother died, her father married another woman. Her stepmother abandoned her and her own father treated his daughter as a stepdaughter. Later she was living with her aunt, whom she is afraid of, who always shouts and grumbles “They had the wretch to torture us” about her.

She is described as a barefooted girl, wearing green cotton salwar, stripped shirt patched all over with a dirty dupatta, and untidy hair. She seldom changes her clothes. She wore the same shirt both in summer and the coldest days of winter. She had no one to care for her rather she is more or less a slave to the family she is living with heavy workloads which are more than her capacity to work.

Kammo was afraid to talk with Hamida as both belongs to two different religions. But she befriended Hamida, who offered her some clothes, food, and a new pair of slippers.

***Her frail body began to fill up; her swallow, sunken cheeks became pink and rounded.
Hamida helped her wash her hair and plaited it. (41)***

They shared the bonding of mother and daughter as well as friends. Kammo made excuses to visit Hamida. Later they stopped meeting each other as Kammo was threatened by her aunt.

Her words

***My aunt says that if I come to your house again she will suck the blood out of my body.
(41)***

That was the last meeting of Kammo and Hamida.

2.4.3 Taro:

Taro's story explains a lot about the life of a married girl during the post-colonial era. She is young, sallow-faced girl with large and melancholic eyes who lived next door to Hamida. Hamida is drawn to this girl because of her poor condition.

Taro is a mentally disturbed girl who lived in the surroundings of Pooro. She was married earlier and had been ill since her wedding day. Always gets fainting fits whenever she was due to go to her husband's house back. Each time she visits her maternal home, she was thinner than before.

Her skin color was similar to that of a spring onion and her face was like a stick of turmeric yellowish in color. Some believed that she was possessed by a spirit and others said that she had contracted some unknown disease.

Her bones stuck out of her flesh. But no one did anything about her. (43)

No attention was given to the girl's poor condition by both her maternal members and in-laws. She is deprived of proper medical treatment.

She was married to someone who already was in a relationship with some other low-caste woman which his parents never wished for. They instead wished for a girl as a daughter-in-law of their own caste. So taro was married to their son. They had no thought for the girl whom they proposed to get as their daughter-in-law.

Her words about her mother

"She will shed a few tears and then forget about me." (44)

This explains how careless her mother was towards her child. Her mother believes that it is a man's privilege to treat his wife as he likes as parents' lips are sealed after giving their daughter away. Taro further adds

After a while she (mother) burst out: “When parents give away a daughter in marriage, they put a noose around her neck and hand the other end of the rope to the man of their choice”. (44)

She feels like she is of no use to her parents and her husband as another woman is the mistress of both his heart and house. She feels a sense of loneliness and goes through the conflict of belongingness. She felt like she is whore, a common prostitute who sells her body for a mess of pottage and a few rags (her clothes).

Though she was unable to break the perfidious institution of marriage, she was courageous enough to speak about what she was going through.

2.4.4 A mad woman:

A madwoman was raped by an unknown person. Since she became insane, she was roaming around the village naked.

The sun had scorched her skin to the semblance of black parchment. Her hair was tangled and hung like ropes about her shoulders. Her body was caked with dirt and appeared as if she had never washed since the day she was born. (50)

She wore only a salwar which covered her waist till her ankles. Though people tried to help her by offering clothes, she was again seen as naked. She became part of the village. Many teased her and some elders rebuked her. Later she died giving birth to a baby boy who was adopted by Hamida.

2.4.5 Unknown young girls:

Hamida found a Young girl who was being pushed by some goondas to dance naked in front of them.

The same evening Hamida found another girl hiding in their sugarcane field who reveals to the former that goondas pick out women they like to spend the night with them. In the same way, the latter was also forced to spend her preceding nine nights with different men.

2.4.6 Lajo

Then comes the story of Lajo, Pooro's sister-in-law (sister of her ex-fiance Ram Chand and her brother's wife), who was abducted and kept as a mistress by a Muslim man in her own house. She was suffering from jaundice but she was deprived of proper treatment as she refused to cohabit with the man who abducted her. Pooro planned to rescue her by any means, she also succeeded in doing so.

2.5 HIGHLIGHTING SOME CRITICAL POINTS

Along with the problems of women during partition, Amrita Pritam also brilliantly depicted the struggles which are prevailed for decades. Especially the preference for boy child over girl child. This is a kind of characteristic of Indian society that demolishes the confidence of being a girl at an early age of her childhood. In fact, many families lament the birth of a girl child, they consider the birth of a girl child as an unfortunate one, and they recognize a girl child as the curse of god and goddess. And the harsh reality is that female infanticide was at its peak during the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries and at the time of partition as well. Girl babies were killed by their own families.

Pooro's mother had had three daughters in succession with only two years between them.

She wished that her next child should be another son.

(3)

Pooro's mother gave birth to five children and she was expecting her sixth child a baby boy. Many village women along with Pooro's mother offered prayers to idols made of cow dung which was covered with a bright, red veil bordered with gold. Pooro's mother and her companions in offering prayers exactly represent those women who are biased towards their son. They chanted together in chorus:

Holy mother, be cross when you come!

Holy mother, be happy when you go!

(4)

She sensibly interpreted both ways of discrimination towards girls; the first being the preference of son over daughter and the second, the opinion of “girl child being a burden” of their parents.

Pooro’s parents were resolved to lighten themselves of the burden of a daughter.

Pooro’s father presented the boy’s parents with five silver rupees and a piece of sugar candy and so “booked” him for his daughter

(3)

The outhouse was all a glitter with brass utensils to be given away in the dowry.

(10)

These words express the burden of being a child (especially a daughter) to their own family. Parents feel relaxed or lightened when they get married their daughter to a strange person. Dowry was more or less similar to bribing the groom for marrying a girl which again highlights the concept of a girl being a burden to her family including her in-laws.

O Mother of mine, clasp me to your bosom

And answer just one question

Tell me not a long tale.

Tell me why you bore me

If tonight we have to apart?

I have got out my spinning wheel,

I gave my wads of cotton,

I’ll spin sheets with square patterns

To sons are given homes and palaces;

Daughters are exiled to foreign lands.

These lamenting words by Pooro express her love for her mother. Also, she criticizes daughters getting married and exiled to strangers' houses, and the preference of sons for giving houses and palaces over daughters. Pooro's mother's opinion about girls mirrors the ruthless truth of mankind.

2.6 THE CONTRAST OF TWO FEATURES OF INDIA – CULTURAL HERITAGE Vs HARMFUL EVIL PRACTICES:

India is well known as the "land of cultures and diversities". Indian society and religions are famous for their special traditions. Especially when it comes to rituals performed during various festivals. In Hinduism, people worship and offer prayers to goddesses along with god. Goddess Durga is worshiped exceptionally in Bengal regions. Goddesses are hailed in the Hindu religion. After all this girls face such cruel reality, they are felt inferior to boys, women are recognized as inferior to men, and such beliefs are considered as good for both girls and society.

Such thoughts not only humiliate women, but it makes them confined at home; curb their freedom, liberty, and rights; set limits along with boundaries and make them serve only their home and families, protect and preserve the honor of their families which are considered as only responsibilities of women.

'deh samajh lete hai log aurat ko rooh bhi hoti hai usmei kahaa sochate hai?' Singh translated this as 'woman is merely considered as a body, but she also possesses soul within herself.'

These words by Amrita signifies and reminds the status of women, especially in third world countries, and highlights the victimization of women who are portrayed as a powerless object of society.

CHAPTER 3
SUNLIGHT ON A BROKEN COLUMN
ATTIA HOSAIN

3.1 AN OVERVIEW

This Chapter explores post-colonial feminism in the novel Sunlight on a Broken Column. Female characters are being studied. It emphasizes on societal norms, patriarchal thoughts, and restrictions in the day-to-day life of a girl. It also examines political developments during the partition and its impact on the younger generation.

- **Female characters:** Laila, Abida, Zahra, Nandi
- **Themes:** familial structures, relationships, and restrictions privilege, patriarchy, personal freedom, freedom of thoughts and actions.

3.2 SUNLIGHT ON A BROKEN COLUMN:

This novel is written based on personal experience. It does not directly deals with violence and riots of partition rather it deals with the psychological impact of partition exclusively into a Muslim family. Moreover, this novel highlights those concerns that are related to the appropriation of women regarding their cultural values and traditions. This novel also brings out the effects of political interference in an orthodox family.

The novel revolves around the notion of personal space for women, especially about conflicts between freedom of thought and freedom of action. The novelist also talks about Zenana: a separate place for women in a Muslim family. Women in the family are confined to these walls of zenana in Muslim families. The distinction between male and female children was much more visible as more preference and privilege were given to a male child over a female child. This preference for a male child over a female has a long history in India. Minimal rights are guaranteed to girl children. Education is one among them. Many rich families provide education to their daughters along with their sons. A possible reason could be to show

off that the rich families then had liberal ideas. But in reality, they don't want their children to get into the influenced liberal ideas of Western education.

Laila, the protagonist of the story, was allowed to Western education as per her father's wish. As she lost her parents in her very childhood, she was living in a joint family under the guardianship of her uncle Hamid. The family wished to take care of her as long as she was unmarried.

Laila's uncle Hamid is also among those people who behave liberal or pretend liberal outwardly. But when the story progresses it is revealed that he tends to control all the happenings in the home.

This novel highlights the long-lasting feudal system of a family which was practiced for generations where women in the family are considered inferior to men. The concept of the feudal system is discussed in this novel, as the transition and change that occurred in the family due to the liberal ideas of the younger generation which was the outcome of Western education.

New education paved for personal space for women. Slowly they got to know about their rights. They developed revolutionary thoughts and understood the oppressive modes of society. The gap between the two generations is cleverly depicted in the novel. The younger generation seems more liberated. They wanted to support and enjoy their freedom, identity, freedom of expression, speech, personhood, etc.

The older generation is rather interested in holding up their conservative thoughts. On the other hand, women from the older generation are reluctant to approve of new developments and liberal ideas.

Anita Desai point out

The abounding love of the land they own and dominate, yes, and ideally the sense of duty and responsibility that could justify such a power, but the younger men in the family, and some of the young women, begin to question it, stirred as they are by their liberal Western education as well as the ideas of freedom and independence that they have imbibed through their reading and heated discussions at school and college (Sunlight on a Broken Column, 9)

3.3 FEMALE CHARACTERS OF THE STORY:

3.3.1 Laila:

Laila is the narrator of the novel who is just fifteen years old. Lost her parents at an early age. Therefore she was taken care of by her paternal family. She was given Western education as per her father's wish. She has a modern sense of thinking despite being brought up in a highly conservative family. Throughout her teenage, she is involved in seeking answers to her conflicting thoughts about the superiority of religious thoughts which according to her imposes several restrictions on women and modern education which provides better scope for women to live with self-respect and dignity. She chose the latter to lead her life. She was portrayed as someone who fails to understand the self-sacrificing nature of women.

She had a relationship with Ameer and fought against her family to marry him. After Ameer death's she was supported by her maid Nandi and her cousin Asad.

3.3.2 Aunt Abida:

Aunt Abida has a key role in Laila's life. She is an independent-minded, strong woman. She is capable of taking care of family and crisis in the absence of the patriarch of the family. She is also sensitive to the requirements of others in the novel. She is married to a negative man who is a widower with grown-up children. As soon as she married, she was sent to her in-law's home. Laila lost her biggest support. But the relationship between them is maintained.

This relationship is tested on several occasions. 1) Laila is attracted to her kinsman Ameer and she wished to marry him but Aunt Abida disapproved of their relationship. 2) When Aunt Abida fell ill and needs Laila, she postponed visiting her aunt and spent her time with Ameer. 3) After the Death of Laila's husband, Aunt Abida failed to show her concern towards Laila as she was against their relationship.

Belonging to two different situations their attitude is the same towards approaching an issue. But the relationship between these two strong women became complicated with time.

But slowly she became submissive to her brother's wishes. Her life took a sudden downturn when she married. She constitutes those intelligent women who are being subjected to oppressive traditional and cultural values. She was deprived of her individuality, efficiency in controlling things, her decisive nature. Moreover, no serious effort was made by her husband to provide medical efforts. Her life is seen as someone who has made sacrifices to preserve her traditions

3.3.3 Zahra:

Laila and Zahra are cousins. They are almost the same age and have grown up together. Both are in contrast in nature and poles apart. Zahra grew up conservatively as per her mother's wish. She was provided with education in Arabic and Persian. Unlike Laila, she accepts her fate and does not have the curiosity to understand the situation. She was neither interested in education nor in liberal thoughts. After her marriage, she was completely changed. She was allowed to attend parties and wear modern clothes. Zahra had no such conflicts which Laila was going through. She was ready to accept whatever future was stored for her but not with courage, instead, she understood it has a way of living or any traditional practices.

3.3.4 Nandi:

Nandi is a Hindu girl, working in Laila's Muslim family. She is the daughter of a washer-man who is portrayed as a rebel girl who takes a stand against the injustice that happens to her. But within a limited time, she comes under the control of any male member either her father or anyone from Laila's family. She is depicted as someone capable of talking against her family. She gets beaten up for what she does. Once Laila's uncle also stroke her just because she was a girl and he was a man who has the right to beat others, especially servants. She was supported by Laila. Later on, she supported Laila in raising her child. Her thoughts are so similar to Laila's without any education.

Novelist highlighted hierarchical practices among families which curbed women's freedom in the name of traditional values and culture.

CHAPTER 4

SECULAR IDEALS

4.1 AN OVERVIEW

Interestingly this chapter deals with and exposes the secularist perspective in the selected novels.

4.2 SECULARISM IN THE POST-COLONIAL LITERATURE

Post-colonial literature contains different notions which can be explored. One among them is secularism. This chapter aims to explore the secular discourse of novels and novelists' unbiased approach towards representing the characters and their religion in the novel.

4.3 SECULARISM

The word secular has a wide range of meanings. The term “secular” means having no connection with any religion or religious basis. It can also be defined as providing equal opportunities to all religions without any partiality or discrimination on the grounds of religion. It is a principle of conducting human affairs based on secular, rational, and natural characteristics. In a political sense, it is the non-interference of the state in religious affairs. There are some exceptions to this principle. Exceptional cases are forced conversions, unhealthy traditional practices, discriminating traditions, inhumane cultural practices, etc.

4.4 COMMUNAL DISHARMONY AS A REASON FOR PARTITION:

One of the main reasons for partition was conflicts between religions. Religious violence was happening against each other. It was started and fuelled further by British policies which increased hatred among different religious troops in India. British's divide-and-rule policy played a key role in dividing and creating hatred among Indians based on religion.

The India-Pakistan partition ended as a ruthless, harsh, and arrogant event in the history of undivided India. In August month of 1947 India country was divided and split into two

new countries. These countries were born based on religion. Pakistan was considered a separate country for Muslims. Whereas, India adopted the notion of Secularism.

4.5 INDIAN SECULARISM

The Indian model of secularism is unique, analytical, rational, problem-solving, and systematic. This model of secularism is inspired from Western countries where the government does not interfere in religious affairs. But India chose a positive mode of engagement. Indian Principle of secularism is “Sarva Dharma Sambhava” which means that though the paths may be different for all the religions, the destination of paths is same literally means that equal respect is given to all the religions in the country. People are free to practice any religion and are allowed to give religious preaches in the country. In fact, they are encouraged to respect others’ religions along with practicing their own religion. India does not have a state religion of its own i.e. we do not have any official religion of our country. India not only embraces all the religions around the world but also incorporates different forms of ethnic groups and lingual groups within it.

Indian form of secularism is “Positive Secularism”. This concept of secularism of embraced and promoted by many famous personalities. Some well-known personalities are Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda, and Jawaharlal Nehru. Mahatma Gandhi’s secularist vision was to have brotherly relationships with the members of other communities, respecting their religious sentiments and pursuit of truth. On the other hand, Jawaharlal Nehru secularism was focusing on scientific improvements in the country.

These great personalities believed that positive secularism not only highlights the ethos and traditions of India but also makes people feel proud of Indian culture.

4.6 PROVISIONS FOR SECULARISM IN INDIAN CONSTITUTION

The preamble, the identity card of the constitution, contains the word ‘secular’ which was amended and added to the constitution by the forty-second Amendment Act of 1976 (India is a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic, republic). It literally means that India is a constitutionally secular state not prioritizing any particular religion. Interestingly in 1973, the secular character of the constitution was added to the basic structure of the constitution in the Kesavananda Bharati case and Supreme Court further declared that any amendment to the

basic structure of the constitution is invalid. In India, there is no separate wall of separation between religion and the state. Both can interact and intervene in each other's affairs within legally and judicially prescribed parameters.

In India, religious minorities are given the right to establish their own educational institutions. In fact, they are allowed to receive aid from the state to establish their institutions. As India maintains positive engagement with religious troops, it is constitutionally allowed to remove evils from religious practices. Practices of sati, untouchability, polygamy, early and child marriages, marriage by abduction, Bandi Devaru (cutting the fingers of an unmarried woman during a religious practice), wife-beating, dowry deaths, honor-killings, animal or bird sacrifice, preventing Dalits from entering temples and other religious abuses are banned in India. In such cases, the government intervenes and supports the victims of abusive practices.

Above all, some national-level departments are established by the state to maintain and protect religious affairs. Departments of Religious Endowments, Wakf Boards, etc. It also helps people in appointing trustees of the boards.

4.7 WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO EXAMINE THE SECULARSIT PERSPECTIVE?

It is significant to study this perspective because threats to this point of view are increasing every day in our country. Though India identifies itself to be a secular state, people in India are deeply steeped in religion. Especially a blend of religion and politics.

It was done for the mobilization of votes based on religion, region, caste, etc. which has put Indian Secularism in danger. The politicization of any one religious group leads to the competitive politicization of many other religious groups which ends in creating hatred and conflicts between religious troops. Communal riots are the manifestation of this competitive politicization. Some examples are a recent clash between Hindus and Muslims in Karnataka regarding the Hijab, campaigns against love jihad, ghar-wapsi or reconversion, cases in the news about of honor-killings of couples who would have done either inter-caste or inter-religion marriage, etc.

Lack of communal harmony leads to inter-religious conflicts and creates unnecessary traumas among children and especially among youth who further will get inspired and

radicalized by terrorist groups such as ISIS. They tend to create empathy for such organizations which is unfortunate and a great loss to both India and World.

4.8 SECULARISM IN THE SELECTED NOVELS:

4.8.1 Pinjar

4.8.1.1 Rashida

Rashida, a Muslim man, is the male protagonist of the novel Pinjar. He abducted Pooro, a Hindu girl to avenge her family since he is drawn to her. Abduction of someone is an inhumane practice. But Rashida's character is portrayed entirely differently. Rashida immensely loved her. He also married her against her wishes. Her religion and identity were changed. This could be because of the impact of existing patriarchal thoughts of the colonial era which is unacceptable. But she was taken care of by him and from beginning to end of the story he proved how pure was his love towards her. He surrendered all his happiness to her after their marriage.

Despite being taunted by her, he wished to restore all the pleasures of her being a wife. Rashida's gentlemanliness was tested in several situations.

Firstly, Rashida condemned about abduction against his family heads.

Secondly, taking care of his wife. He obeyed all her words since day one of their marriage. Even before getting married, when she was placed in the forlorn house after her abduction, she was never mistreated by him, rather she was given food, and a separate room to sleep and he even massaged her head and limbs.

Thirdly, when Pooro's brother burns all his Harvest, Rashida never nurtured hatred against Pooro and her brother rather he solved all the disputes related to his Harvest burning.

Lastly, abducting all the other girls of the village. This might sound strange but he abducted them along with his wife to help them. They together helped some unknown young to

reach refugee camps safely. Surprisingly he also helped Pooro's sister-in-law (her brother's wife and Ramchand's sister) to escape from servitude and safely aided them in reaching refugee camps.

4.8.1.2 Pooro:

Pooro, a normal Hindu girl is the female protagonist of the story. She is married to a Muslim boy Rashida. Her craving for Ramchand (ex-fiance) is visible in the story. She expected Ramchand's help and had a hope that he would accept her even after being abducted. With that hope, she escaped from Rashida. But unfortunately, not only Ramchand but also her family rejected her. Her state of confusion began. She was confused about Ramchand as she was engaged to him who did not accept her. She was thinking about the difference between getting engaged to a man and getting married to a man.

Damayanti Sahgal narrates to Urvashi Butalia, —Listening to them, I found it difficult to believe that even in the closest of relationships in families, people could be so ignorant of --- and indifferent to --- what was going on in the life of someone so close to themll (The Other Side of Silence, 113).

Rashida came running breathlessly towards her. Pooro stopped in her footsteps. Even death had slammed the door in her face. Rashida grabbed her by the arm. She followed him without a word. (Pinjar 23)

These words by the Novelist express Rashida's love for Pooro. Though at first, she hated him, she started recognizing his love.

Taro's story made her own home appear like a heaven or refuge. (49)

She is also portrayed as someone who gives more importance to humanity over religious sentiments. There are several instances where she wished to help girls irrespective of their religious background. She does not even hesitate to massage the limbs of those young girls from different religions. She adopted a Hindu madwoman's son and fought for him against villagers along with her husband. Her own family now had people from different religious groups. She befriended Kammo, who is from the Hindu community. She shared a bond of mother and daughter with her and offered clothes, food, and a pair of new slippers.

All instances mentioned above clarify that novelist was a secularist. This novel not only highlights women's subjugation but also gives a new path to explore through its secular discourse.

4.8.2 Sunlight on a Broken Column

The novel stresses India's secular thoughts. Beginning from the older generation to the younger generation, secular thoughts are being expressed in different forms. Friends of Baba Jan include the Hindu community, other Muslim relatives and friends, and officials of the British. She named them, Hanstey Dada for Thakur Balbir Singh, Motey Dada for Raja Hasan Ahmed of Amirpur, and Gorey Dada for Mr. Freemantle. All four friends including Baba Jan are different in terms of their backgrounds, culture, traditions, and power structures. Despite having all such differences their bond of friendship was so strong. From celebrating festivals belonging to different religions to adapting to Western culture such as educated women from rich families attending club meetings and parties etc. depict how secular they lived in their own way.

The younger generation in the family is more attracted to secularism lot. In fact, their active participation and striving for new and liberal political developments across the country are emphasized again and again. Youngsters from different backgrounds – educated and illiterate, rich and poor, Hindu, Muslim, and Anglo-Indians together reacted to developing political events. Similar to her grandfather, Laila also has friends from different communities. Education in school and college was the reason for Laila to create and maintain a bond with people from across religions. Some of her friends are Joan, Sita, Ramona, Nadira, and Nita. Along with school and college, some other social institutions like clubs, parties, and functions enabled people to think big and made them understand others' religions and communities.

The household servants appointed in Laila's family include people from all backgrounds, communities, and religions. Interestingly they are allowed to observe their traditions and religious practices. On the other hand, they enjoy and celebrate Muslim festivals as well. The sudden downturn in Laila's life from being brought up in a joint family along with servants in childhood to a single parent bringing up her daughter with the help of Hindu women Nandi again signifies the importance of secularism.

Asad, a cousin of Laila also portrayed as a man with secularist thoughts. He actively participated in political events which had a major influence on the younger generation. In point of fact, there is a situation where Muslims are being abused by Hindu refugees and a Hindu friend of a Muslim reacted against this insult in support of his Muslim friend. These relationships, concerns for each other, their loyalties among them, and helping instances lay a ray of hope for people to live together in harmony.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 AN OVERVIEW

This chapter concludes the thesis by holding up the humane and secularist visions of women novelists of the post-colonial era.

5.2 CONCLUSION

Independence along with partition resulted in great and inevitable violence. And its impact which is still haunting all the countries involved. The term 'partition' itself incorporates different meanings and point of view. Contrasting and conflicting ideals of people that prevailed during partition are deeply rooted in the country and induce society to fight with each other.

Also, it offers multi-layered narratives and perspectives which provides a lot of scope for students to explore through different approaches. There are multiple objectives to interpret in the books of any Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Western authors. There are some fictional accounts by authors who contributed to Post-colonial feminism such as Kushwant Singh, Amrita Pritam, Attia Hosain, Urvashi Butalia, and Saadat Hassan Manto.

Since the Industrial Revolution, women are fighting for their rights and empowerment. They have been able to smash the traditional boundaries set by their society. But during the pre-industrial era, women were confined only to their homes and had key roles without any significance.

In India, working women face harassment and molestation along with accidents. During partition violence against them was at its peak. Ironically, communal disharmony by so-called conservatives who took the responsibility of sustaining traditional values got partition as an excuse to attack women who forgot to sustain the particular traditional value that women are praised and hailed as goddess in India. I consider this as the biggest flaw of conservatives who forgot to treat women as human beings which is one of the most important cultural values of our country.

Since then women are being attacked every day and conservatives trigger communal riots in every possible way. As a result, people got used to accusing and abusing the victims of crimes such as rapes, and abductions, and blaming each other's religion.

5.3 COMMUNAL RIOTS IN INDIA

Here are some communal riots in India which occurred after the independence.

1967 Ranchi-Hatia riots, 1969 Gujarat riots, Worli riots, 1981 Bihar riots, Nellie massacre, 1984 Bhiwandi, and anti-Sikh riots, 1985 Gujarat riots, and recently 2022 Kanpur and Ranchi violence.

The 2022 Karnataka Hijab controversy among students provoked people to fight for their religion. Such cases among students can cause great threats to Indian secularism and affect young generations who further might radicalize non-secular ideals.

5.4 CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN IN INDIA

As India is celebrating 75 years of independence and freedom day, these two words remain alien to women in India. They neither got independence nor freedom. There is a wrong perception that woman after independence is not restricted because she has all the political rights that are necessary. But many fail to understand that she is not economically and socially independent. She is not allowed to be financially independent, and not allowed to take decisions on her own.

Some examples have been included to justify the victimization of women in the current society.

5.4.1 Last recorded case of sati was practiced in 1987 by Roop Kanwar at the age of 18:

Roopkyvarba Kanwar burned herself alive along with her dead husband. The worst part of the case is she was just 18 years old by that time and had been married to Maal Singh Shekhawat for eight months. She was hailed as sati-mata (sati mother or pure mother). Sati was banned in 1829. This was an "officially" recorded case that happened after

158 years of banning sati. This made governments to activate laws against sati and the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act was established at the central level.

5.4.2 Metropolitan and urban cities record the highest cases of crimes against women:

Report by NCRB:

- The rate of crime against women (number of incidents per 1 lakh population) increased from 56.5% in 2020 to 64.5% in 2021.
 - 31.8%: Cruelty by husband or his relatives
 - 20.8%: Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty
 - 17.6%: Kidnapping and Abduction
 - 7.40%: Rape
- Jaipur had the highest rate at over 194%, followed by Delhi, Indore, and Lucknow.
- Chennai and Coimbatore (Both in Chennai) had the lowest rate.
- Metropolitan cities record the highest number of cases. Delhi tops the list in 2021 (in actual numbers) having 13,892 cases. Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad follow the list.

5.4.3 Domestic violence:

The highest number of cases (270) were filed in Kerala. UP and Bihar registers the highest number of dowry deaths. 6589 cases were registered in India in 2021.

5.4.4 Sexual Violence in the Workplace:

The number of women workforce reduced by 10 million in 2021 due to workplace harassment and sexual abuse.

5.5 NOVELS:

The current thesis adopts i) post-colonial feminism and ii) examines the secularist perspective of partition authors.

While approaching the selected novels: Pinjar (1915) by Amrita Pritam a Sikh writer, and Sunlight on a Broken Column (1965) by Attia Hosain a Muslim writer, I found similarities in their representation of women in society irrespective of their religion and interest in creating awareness about secularism.

Even in today's world, there is a strong need for consciousness about how to treat women and how one should be able to control his/her non-secular thoughts by not hurting others' religious sentiments. Novelists themselves are involved in creating awareness through their stories about treating all religions respectfully, notwithstanding any religious and gender biases. There are some instances where the leads of the stories approach secular thoughts. They were progressive enough and far ahead of their time.

India is a religiously diverse country and the religious assets of India must be celebrated. Being the highest populated country surpassing China, India should remain an example of treating women well which further glorifies the traditional values of our country. This is possibly achievable only when people especially the younger generation are given value education to hold up other's religion along with their religion and teach behavioral traits to treat women with dignity.

Moreover, the Indian constitution itself promotes these two notions in fundamental duties of a citizen under Article 51A –

To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic, and regional or sectional diversities and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

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