



PROFOUND ELUCIDATIONS IN AMRITA PRITAM'S REVENUE STAMP

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Abstract:

Amrita Pritam was the first important woman writer in Punjabi literature. She wrote novels, essays and poems. Her writings concentrated on the problems of women. She emphasized women's experience under patriarchy and brought the focus on to the marginalized. She was the first woman to receive the Sahitya Academy Award in 1956. Her important work as a novelist was *Pinjar* (the Skelton). Amrita Pritam was an iconic Indian writer, whose works as well as life, were a bold statement that redefined not just the Punjabi literary canon but also found new words and images for how Indian women perceived themselves. Amrita as a poet and fiction writer is known in the country but the *Revenue Stamp* has added a new height in her prestige as a writer. It is a journey of emotions covered with literary expressions.

Key Words: Woman Writer, Emphasized, Marginalized, Emotions & Literary Expressions

Introduction:

Amrita Pritam (1919-2005) was the first important woman writer in Punjabi literature. She wrote novels, essays and poems. She put Punjabi literature on the world map. No other writer is as synonymous with Punjabi literature as Amrita Pritam. She was the first woman to receive the Sahitya Academy Award in 1956. Her important work as a novelist was *Pinjar* (The Skelton). Later she received Bharatiya Gyanpith, one of India's highest literary award. The Padmashree was awarded to her in 1969 and finally Padma Vibhushan, India's highest civilian award in 2004. She was honored with India's highest literary award Sahitya Academy of Letters, the Sahitya Academy Fellowship given to her for her life time achievements in 2004. Amrita is the first recipient of the Punjabi Ratna Award conferred upon her by Punjab Chief minister Cap. Amarinder Singh. She has received DLitt honorary degrees from many universities including Delhi University-1973, Jabalpur University-1973 and Vishwa Bharti-1983. In her career of over six decades, she has penned 28 novels, 18 anthologies of poetry, 5 short stories and 16 miscellaneous prose volumes.

Amrita Pritam was an iconic Indian writer, whose works as well as life, were a bold statement that redefined not just the Punjabi literary canon but also found new words and images for how Indian women perceived themselves. She defied social norms and conventions. There was no split between life and literature for Amrita because literature was her life. Her writings concentrated on the problems of women. She emphasized women's experience under patriarchy and brought the focus on to the marginalized. Her intense and prolific works deal with the palpable problems of life, wants and denials of men and women. She is described as "one who loved dearly and suffered terribly".

Revenue Ticket:

Amrita as a poet and fiction writer is known in the country but the *Revenue Stamp* has added a new height in her prestige as a writer. It is a journey of emotions covered with literary expressions. This is a study of an autobiography of a woman who evolves from a sentimental girl to an emotional woman and then to a passionate individual.

For a women writer in the male dominated society, writing brings a lot of problems. She gave her desires, dreams and idealism in her autobiography *Rashidi Ticket*. It was written in Punjabi and later on translated into English as *The Revenue Stamp* by Krishna Gorowara. Her works have been translated in English, Albanian, Bulgarian, French, Polish, Russian, Spanish and all the 21 Indian languages.

The famous writer and journalist Khushwant Singh had once told Amrita Pritam that the whole story of her life was so inconsequential and brief that it could be easily contained within the small space at the back of a revenue stamp. She remembered the joke and called her autobiography *Raseedi Ticket (The Revenue Stamp)*. In a brief prologue to *The Revenue Stamp*, she shot back, "Whatever happened in my life happened between the layers of thought that found their way into novels and poems. What was left? Still, I thought I might write a few lines - something to complete the account book of my life and at the end, seal it with this revenue stamp as it were. Or am I with this revenue stamp setting a seal to my novels and poems....my entire, literary work....I wonder." This one incident probably sums up this prolific and ground-breaking writer's philosophy of life – "My work /my life will be my answer".

Explosive in its revelations and poetic in its content, the book is a candid account of her extraordinary life. Amrita Pritam reflects on her full and creative journey of life - her edgy relationship with her father, her ventures into the world of literature, tributes received, insults borne and the rather tempestuous equation she had with society at large. She was often criticized for her outspoken and allegedly explicit writing. Several of her

books and poetry collections were banned for either being disrespectful to religion or being sexually vivid. In her autobiography Pritam has expressed her anguish over her contemporaries' malice against her and the narrow-mindedness of the world of Punjabi literature.

On the personal front, Pritam has dwelt on her failed first marriage, her relationship with Imroz - the noted artist and writer and her rather unique and probably unrequited love for Sahir Ludhianvi - the famous poet and Hindi films lyricist. In her beliefs and writings, Amrita Pritam was much ahead of her times and consequently, had to face the angst of society. All this has been beautifully and lyrically brought out in this autobiography.

The title *The Revenue Stamp* symbolizes the writer's own soul. The size of other stamps keep on changing, but that of the revenue stamp remains the same. *The Revenue Stamp* then appears to be a tale of an eternal soul which survives all storms like a steady flame of a lamp. Besides, the special quality of the revenue stamp lies in its use; it is used for the verification of documents. By writing *The Revenue Stamp*, Amrita Pritam validates the truth of her journey as a writer, a woman and as a human-being.

Amrita's yearnings for equality and harmony are reflected in *The Revenue Stamp*. In fact these are the principles for which Amrita fights throughout her life. *The Revenue Stamp* is an astonishing illustration of introspective and non-judgmental elucidation of her life. It is the illumination of that sense of self-discovery, by the writer of which she was not fully aware before she began to write. It depicts the trials and tribulations that she had to go through and how her experiences helped her to develop her humane outlook towards life.

Conclusion:

The Revenue Stamp is the book that confirms her artistic skills. It is an affirmation of the life she lived as a woman and as a poet. Her autobiography is her stamp on the life she led and the vision she aspired for. She was a woman who has not only loved poetry, but also lived poetry. *The Revenue Stamp* reflects her rebellious ideas. Amrita Pritam's autobiography reveals a woman's perspective. The versatile writer says: "I think a writer is a traveller. You pen down with utmost honesty whatever you see while travelling through life." Experiencing trauma has brought vivid human feeling to her life and writing. Her writing has the ability to shift you to another realm and ponder. The language of the book is so gentle and the way Amrita Pritam explains little details about her is heart-touching. Being a poet, she maintains the grace of her creativity while narrating the story of her life. Her vision of life is broad enough to make her story the 'Stamp of Truth.' She has wonderfully mingled political, social, religious and literary conditions of her times and given a full length portrait of twentieth century. Amrita Pritam for whom an autobiography is "the Gospel of truth" has succeeded in penning down her inner world and in voicing her desires, dreams and idealism in her autobiography *The Revenue Stamp*.

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