
Expression Of Soul and Autonomous Self of Amrita Pritam in The Revenue Stamp

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Abstract:

The creativity and intelligence of Amrita Pritam can be found in her autobiographies, which have created an aura of strength, creativity, trust, love, emotions, feelings, thoughts, and imagination. Amrita Pritam is a renowned Indian novelist, essayist, and poet who made significant contributions to Punjabi literature. Her works often explored themes of love, loss, identity, and human conditions and situations. The expression or exploration of invariably a different subject to tackle or face due to its suppleness. That's why philosophers have tried to interpret things according to their own ways. An autobiography is a draft or piece of work in which the author or writer puts himself according to his comfort zone or expresses himself by his own choice. The present paper highlights Amrita Pritam's expressions of her soul and her real or self-governing nature. For Amrita Pritam, the essence of womanhood is secondary to her essence as a writer. It looks like she is born to represent her boldness and feelings of love and care to society. Pritam was one of the first women writers in Punjabi literature, challenging societal norms and paving the way for other female authors. Amrita Pritam is primarily a poet and her poetic or autonomous self is represented in her autobiography namely 'The Revenue Stamp'. Through her writing, she conveys her essence and her independent identity. Her works illustrate a connection between her steadfast self and the surrounding social context. Both of her autobiographies are not deeply analytical and lack a chronological sequence of events; the fact that she has authored two autobiographies rather than just one highlights her emphasis on her 'self,' which she presents to her audience in two distinct forms. Her autobiography, *Rasidi Ticket*, translated as *The Revenue Stamp* (1976), starts with a linear account of her life experiences, but as the book progresses, it takes on a non-linear approach. Amrita, as an individual, believes in the quality of creativity as an artist. She finds it indisputable that every human being, irrespective of gender, has the right to achieve freedom and happiness. She believes in truth and justice as the primary norms to maintain a social order. Promise, words, feelings, and books are always sacred and worth preservation for Amrita Pritam. She respects the dignity of being as a mark of life. She has triumphantly come out from the trap of middle-class morality and bourgeois conflicts. She has ultimately arrived at the position of an incarnation of

love. Her exploration of life and mind led her to the search for unknown and philosophical mysticism.

Keywords: Creativity, Intelligence, Expression, Womanhood, Autonomous, Autobiography, Self, Marriage, Relationship, Enthusiasm, Femininity.

Introduction

The autobiography of Amrita Pritam, *The Revenue Stamp*, portrays her life as a work of literature, where she articulates her female perspective as an artist. She aimed to introduce her reformist ideas into the collective social awareness in pursuit of truth and understanding. Amrita's earlier years were overshadowed by the harshness of society and her peers. She perceived this experience through her sensitive nature. Ultimately, she came to regard love as the sole means of liberating herself from societal constraints. Her perspective intertwines philosophical insights with a deep concern for truth and knowledge. She approaches the intellect and disposition of women from a unique angle, distinguishing herself from those who merely sympathize or promote superficial slogans. Her appreciation for the societal significance of human virtues, applicable to both genders, is evident in her respect for life itself. Amrita Pritam is known for her outspoken nature and willingness to challenge societal expectations. Her writings often reflected on the challenges faced by individuals in a rapidly changing society. Being the first woman to win the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1956 shows that Amrita Pritam has genius traits in her writing style and uses her intelligence and potential to represent herself. Amrita Pritam, originally named Amrit Kaur, was born on August 31, 1919, in Gujranwala, Punjab. She came from a family of intellectuals, with her mother working as a school teacher and her father being a respected preacher, esteemed scholar, and editor of a literary journal named '*Nagmani*.' Her father played a crucial role in inspiring her to express her emotional turmoil through poetry. Amrita began her literary journey as a poet, initially creating simplistic and traditional works before evolving to write more sensitive pieces. From a young age, her father harbored a strong desire for her to become a poet, which was evident in the way he nurtured her talent. This was reflected in her upbringing, through which she absorbed poetic knowledge, read various books and scriptures, and attended poetry gatherings with her father, where she recited religious prayers. As a writer, Amrita Pritam was shaped by her family influences and societal factors, possessing the ability to impact her community and environment significantly. Her genius as a writer is shown in her thoughts and

personality. Her family background was very traditional, as she was attached to the locals by her heart. She was born in a traditional Sikh family, but she realized her first detachment from her tradition or religion at the age of 11 when she lost her mother, Raj Bibi. After her mother's loss, she and her father moved to Lahore, where her father took care of her and raised her like her mother. The passing of her mother transformed her into a resilient and self-sufficient individual who showcased boldness in her writing. She had her surname Pritam after her marriage which took place in 1935 with Pritam Singh who was the son of a wealthy family in Lahore. But her relations with her husband were not good. She expressed this in her autobiography named '*The Revenue Stamp*', which she wrote after her marriage. Her experience of marriage was unhappy. The narrow path of love differs from marriage, which felt like an imposed obligation. With two children and a husband, her love remained unfulfilled, yet the journey continued. She encountered another companion in her life who consistently walked alongside her. It was a bond that never required labeling. In 1944, she encountered Sahir Ludhianvi, a fellow poet who would eventually become a well-known film lyricist. While she was already married to Pritam Singh, Amrita felt a strong attraction to Sahir, a sentiment she would later document in her autobiography 'Rasidi Ticket.' She ultimately departed from her husband, Pritam Singh, in 1960, at a time when her infatuation with Sahir had reached its height. Nonetheless, Amrita was always aware that forming a sustainable relationship with Sahir Ludhianvi was nearly impossible. Amrita Pritam was aware that establishing a meaningful relationship with Sahir Ludhianvi would be nearly impossible once another woman, singer Sudha Malhotra, entered Sahir's life. Because of her deep admiration for the poet Sahir Ludhianvi, she separated from her husband in 1960. Following the divorce, her creative output became more focused on feminist themes. A significant number of her stories and poems draw inspiration from her painful experiences related to her marriage. Amrita eventually discovered love with Imroz, a well-known artist and writer. Although the two never tied the knot, they shared over forty years together. Amrita served as the muse for many of his artworks, and he created the front covers for all of her books and novels. Her journey of love and life is seen through her works, specially her autobiographies, in which she puts herself in a very interesting and poetic manner. Amrita Pritam's life is not very simple in terms of living, but still, she put efforts to make her life interesting to her and to others as well. Amrita Pritam started her career as a poet focused on romance, but her path took a significant turn as she became inspired by the feminist movement. She was actively engaged in the Progressive Writer's Movement, which was evident in her collection Lok Peed ("People's Anguish," 1944), where she openly criticized the wartime economy following the Bengal famine of 1943. After India achieved independence, she played a role in Guru Radha Kisan's initiative to set up the first Janata Library in Delhi, which was inaugurated by Aruna Asaf Ali and Balraj Sahni. She has produced

remarkable works across various forms of literature. The gravity and profundity of her writing are evident in Amrita Pritam's compositions. Endowed with exceptional skill, this celebrated poet artfully depicts the hardships faced by divorced women and the harsh realities of married life in her writings. Throughout her illustrious career, Amrita produced 28 novels, 18 anthologies of prose, 16 additional prose volumes, and five short stories. Her literature continues to motivate countless people. Many of her written works have also been adapted into films. In 2007, the famous Indian lyricist Gulzar released an album featuring a selection of Amrita Pritam's poetry, which he narrated. Amrita passed away in New Delhi on October 31, 2005. When she died, she was survived by her long-time partner Imroz, her daughter Kandala, her son Navraj Kwatra (who was sadly murdered in 2012), and her grandchildren Aman, Noor, Taurus, and Shilpi.

Self-governing Beliefs

Amrita Pritam had a remarkable life in which she consistently conveyed her beliefs and values to society through her writings and actions. Her joy in being a poet stemmed not only from her spirituality but also from her passion for love, which she found particularly fascinating. She experienced every moment of her life with her soul, whether those moments were filled with joy or sorrow. The way she conveyed her emotions is deeply moving, allowing others to resonate with her feelings at that time. Her emotions were genuine, not just for herself but also for those around her. She has no enthusiasm for religious poetry, unlike her dad. She enjoys composing love poems, but out of a wish to satisfy her father, she keeps them hidden from him. She pays no attention to the opinions of others or the world around her. Amrita Pritam's "Revenue Stamp" is an intensely personal and frequently unorthodox memoir. Instead of a typical chronological narrative, it comprises a series of vignettes, reflections, and emotional insights. Amrita Pritam challenges societal expectations and embraces her individuality. She never give up before societal norms which was very harsh to a female at that time. Even though often depicted as lacking gender, sex, race, age, or class attributes, feminists argue that these notions of 'self' mask an identity that is typically white, healthy, middle-aged, middle-class, and heterosexual male. The poignant statement by Simone de Beauvoir, "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the 'Other'" (The Second Sex xxviii), highlights why the idea of 'self' has garnered significant attention from feminists. Being categorized as the 'Other' signifies existing as a non-subject, a non-person, and a non-agent—the mere physical presence ("Feminist Perspectives on Self"). This explains why the notion of a coherent 'self' aligns better with men than with women. Women's experiences are frequently seen as fragmented or contradictory due to both their intrinsic autonomous selves and the societal pressures they face. Therefore, while striving to comprehend 'self' outside these oppressive norms may obscure women's sense of self, identity, and agency, viewing their struggles in isolation can foster

feelings of personal inadequacy. Interactions such as friendships among women, lesbian partnerships, support networks for survivors of sexual violence and domestic abuse, as well as women's consciousness-raising and advocacy efforts, create environments for women to express and understand their identities, aiding in the restoration of their self-worth through reflection on the societal impact of their experiences. In these settings, women receive encouragement for resisting societal norms and for surmounting individual hardships or challenges. These practices help to ease the weight of 'otherness,' enabling women to assert their subjectivity, agency, and autonomy. The latter should not merely be viewed as self-sufficiency or individual freedom; instead, it is fostered by supportive connections and carries a fundamental sense of responsibility. Subordination undermines women's autonomy in various respects. Internalized oppression not only influences women's desires and fosters a disconnection from their authentic selves, but those in subordinate positions frequently encounter pressures to minimize tensions and appease those in authority ("Feminist Perspectives on Self"). Although patriarchal societies impose subordination and limit women's autonomy, egalitarian communities enhance these effects. Feminist perspectives conceptualize autonomy as a continuous and adaptive journey centered on self-exploration, self-identification, and self-guidance skills. Amrita Pritam's identity as a woman is of little concern. What defines her fulfillment is her identity as a writer, with her role as a woman playing a secondary part. She is acutely aware of her writer persona in her character and only discovers her identity as a woman through her creative endeavors (The Revenue Stamp 32). Helene Cixous suggests that a woman achieves liberation on two fronts: by articulating her 'self' in writing and by expressing herself verbally. However, in Amrita Pritam's case, the notion of achieving liberation through writing is somewhat misplaced, as she has always been free enough to articulate her own identity. She has never experienced oppression, and her 'self' has consistently been governed by her own will, allowing her the freedom to advocate for what is right. Her creative nature is intrinsically powerful, such that her identity as a woman finds expression through her artistry. Her literary works serve as a source of empowerment for other women seeking their own liberation. Her essence is rooted in her creative pursuits, and it is through her artistry that her identity as a woman finds its voice. As a person, she is well-balanced, with her two identities—writer and woman—coexisting harmoniously. Even though her writing identity is predominant, her woman identity gracefully accepts its secondary status. She never supported nor participated in political activism that depended on fanatic codes of religion and morality. It was her profound sense of values like honesty, truth, and compassion for the whole of mankind that she treasured and expressed in her writings. Amrita Pritam's autobiography arrives at their entanglement of existence with the socio-cultural ethos. Amrita Pritam's fiction expresses her artistic longing for human connection. She is an author capable of

resonating with the sensibilities of even the most stringent critics and traditionalists. Her narratives explore the diverse aspects of life. The stories reflect a profound psychoanalytical understanding of the complex lives of individuals. The fiction depicts socio-cultural, ethnic, familial, and religious challenges that contrast with her empathetic nature. The characters she portrays defy simple classifications as either flat or round, classical or modern. They are individuals true to their life experiences. Amrita Pritam represents the perspectives and attitudes of women as a whole. She captures the deep emotional turmoil faced by women in her stories. She explores the essence of women, understanding them intimately and depicting their experiences on the page. She expresses the profound experiences and tragedies in the lives of women. Her body of work is deeply rooted in her feminine perspective. She depicts women as fighters and evolving heroes in her narratives. As a novelist, Amrita crafted books that offer a wide range of social, cultural, and psychological insights. Many issues related to female integrity are explored in her fiction, including love, marriage, divorce, social stigmas, self-awareness, and the violence and cruelty directed at women, as well as the turmoil of conscience and ethics. Amrita's novels are thoroughly examined from the standpoint of female integrity, with all these issues linked to the struggles of morals and conscience. She has the ability to penetrate the inner thoughts of her female characters, understanding them with empathy and compassion. Amrita Pritam draws inspiration from a unique concept of strong, principled women, contrasting with the typical portrayal of submissive and self-sacrificing women in India. The female characters in her stories showcase a wide array of intrinsic value. Despite experiencing hardship, they assert themselves in their quest for freedom. The women in Amrita Pritam's fiction offer avenues to liberate the deep-seated anguish of the female experience. They illustrate the painful narratives of human connections. The portrayal of feminine strength is a consistent theme throughout all of Amrita Pritam's literary works. Amrita's candid narrative of events is interspersed with emotional intensity and logical articulation. She is widely respected for her broad perspective and clear expression of a creative woman's differences, set apart from her deep personal feelings. Amrita Pritam's romanticism infuses her writing with a deep emotional sensitivity toward the suffering that arises from deliberate realism. She creates two distinct realms that blend in with the responses of her female characters. One realm embodies the mundane and yearning ebb and flow of the mind, while the other represents a cruel world populated by pragmatic and indifferent individuals who take advantage of vulnerable and insignificant women. Her poetic insights offer a fresh perspective that introduces unique understandings in her narratives. Her writing captures the complexities of human situations and diverse dimensions of human experience and their consequences. The portrayal of women has evolved, leading to the emergence of a new self-concept in response to patriarchy. This new autonomous self-concept

presents a transformative image of women. The efforts of certain female authors, such as Virginia Woolf and Mary Wollstonecraft, have shaped this new self-concept of women. The modern autonomous self-image of a woman is fearless and audacious, emerging as a new individual seeking fulfillment, identity, and self-discovery. She is straightforward and confidently expresses her needs, desires, and emotions. The woman embraces her distinctiveness and is eager to confront reality rather than escape from it. She exhibits resolute bravery and unwavering determination. She believes in her rights, energy, and self-assertion, standing against discrimination and exploitation. She advocates for liberation and the understanding of feminine ideals through identity and self-affirmation. This sense of feminine integrity helps shape the transformative representations of the new woman. As a motivated literary artist, she takes on the role of a psychological and political analyst, exploring the traditions that highlight the isolation of women in their struggles. Amrita introduces transformative concepts highlighting the importance of social awareness for women. She emphasizes the enhancement of women's lives and creativity for those committed to pursuing knowledge and truth. The idealistic romance reflected in Amrita's artistic sensitivity provided her motivation to embrace life despite her tragic circumstances. Her passion for profound love served as a significant source of inspiration. She crafted deeply passionate poetry. Her expressions of intricate love have consistently been subtle and aesthetically supreme. In her poetry, she captures the emotional experiences of a woman in love as a recurring theme. Amrita's autobiography encapsulates her entire life experience. This autobiography serves as a testament to her truth. She has documented her inner thoughts, expressing her desires, aspirations, and sense of romance. The title *The Revenue Stamp* symbolizes the author's spirit, as stamps continuously change in nature.

Conclusion

The *Revenue Stamp* thus becomes a narrative of a steadfast soul that withstands adversity like the steady flame of a lamp. Through this work, Amrita affirms the realities of her journey as both a writer and an individual. Amrita Pritam's autobiography is an attempt to affirm the loyalty of her inner self. Her writings serve as a reflection of her deepest soul, allowing her to confront her own self-image. In their profound understanding of division, women who are psychologically estranged from their fathers, husbands, or sons found that writing was their sole source of comfort. Similarly, Amrita Pritam embarks on an introspective journey in her quest for freedom, truth, and individuality. Rather than seeking out historical events, Amrita looks for authenticity in the love she holds for herself and others. Her autobiography showcases her steadfast convictions. She exhibits remarkable psychological insight while also believing in the intuitive wisdom of prophetic signs and suggestive dreams. Amrita delves into a deeply spiritual vision of life while simultaneously grappling with the mental distress stemming from her intellectual

examination of existence and circumstances. As a philosopher, she maintains a positive and forward-thinking attitude, yet her reflections arise from the sorrow of her creative spirit, which serves as the source of her internal conflict. Her sensitivity merges the defiance of a rebellious soul with an air of mystical melancholy. She conveys that a woman's existence is nothing short of a trial by fire. Nonetheless, as a writer, she has consistently been fervent and committed to a cause. Amrita Pritam, as one of the earliest authors to challenge societal moral codes, has lived through and weathered the harsh backlash for her choices.

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