

# Exploration of Self in Amrita Pritam's The Revenue Stamp

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**Abstract – Writing an autobiography is an exercise in knowing the self. As women in the phallogocentric discourse have always been written about, a woman's autobiography assumes special significance. The paper seeks to engage with Amrita Pritam's autobiography challenges the stereotypes created by the androcentric discourse about the creativity of women as patriarchy belittles the importance of women's achievements. Her autobiography marks a refusal to be described and portrayed by hegemonic male narratives as she explores her personal and literary journey through her own agency.**

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the most conspicuous voices in Punjabi literature, Amrita Pritam became first woman to win the Sahitya Akademi Award (1956) for her poem 'Sunehre'. Later she received Bharatiya Gyanpith Award, Padmashree Award in 1996, and finally Padma Vibhushan in 2004. "The Revenue Stamp" is a journey of sentiments covered with literary expressions. It is study of an autobiography of woman who evolved from emotional girl to a sentimental woman and then to a passionate individual. It is an assertion of life she spent as a woman and as a poetess. Her autobiography is a stamp on her cognitive life, vision of woman who not only loved poetry but lived poetry.

The title 'The Revenue Stamp' symbolize the writer's own soul, as other stamps used to get various shape where revenue stamp remains static. She was born on 31 August, 1919, at Gujranwala, now in Pakistan. Her mother died when she was eleven and after that she and her father moved at Lahore. She was eleven years old and had not developed the sense of reciprocity by then with either her parents. She went through the vacuity and sense of solitude as she only the child. She started writing the love lyrics secretly as she used to be afraid of her father, who informed her to try her hands over devotional poems. Her father represents the phallogocentric dogmas and convention. It displays how woman finds it difficult to voice out her feeling, emotion, etc. At the age of four, she was engaged and was a teenager of sixteen when she was married off to Pritam Singh. Thus the name 'Pritam' was suffixed to her name from 1935. Then she came down to Delhi as a refugee and inscribed her agony and gave voice to her feelings by writing poem, "Ajj Akaan Warish Shah Nu".

Her autobiography is a record of her journey that she undertook, on outer surface as well as the internal flows. The book consists of six chapters entitled as,

- 1:       resurrecting Time
- 2:       meeting with Centuries
- 3:       Ordeal by Fire
- 4:       In silence Passion Smote
- 5:       The phoenix Dynasty
- 6:       One palm Henna

'An autobiography is usually expected to open with the detail of one's birth' native place, parents, childhood etc. 'The Revenue Stamp' begins in usual way, describing the time period, temperament of social life. She goes to the memory lane to form up the set up. Poet here doesn't start from the past but actually points the finger at present as,

"Is it doomsday? Moment of my life in the womb of time,

Lived a while and after the span of time. Seemingly entombed

Are today alive again, stalk past me"

Amrita pursue the path of truth and stayed honest all her journey. She faced up the first revolt against the religious institutions, when her mother died

inspite of the supplication and lots of prayers and then she spoke her heart out,

"I burst out in red-hot rage; God heeds no one, not even children. there is no God"

This shows the rebellion is rooted in the soil of discontent, disillusionment. She found it very tough to survive all alone as she engulfed in loneliness, solitude. So she started imagined the mate that will provide shelter I'm sun and shower. she writes

"I began writing and it seems to me that I wrote because

I wanted to forget those moments of rejection I felt in him..

In addition, an every poem I wrote, I carried the cross of

Forbidden desires.... my rebellious thoughts pushed me...

The seeds of her creativity and rebellion was thus down in her childhood and teenage agony. This agony was resultant of loneliness and lack of love. The concept of love and woman's existence are so closely inter-related that love occupies a very valuable space in woman's life; as a determinant life it also occupies a very important space in woman's autobiography. Amrita Pritam's self-reflection in 'The Revenue Stamp' are the passage appropriately analyzing how a sensitive woman finds it very difficult to talk about, to write about her love and life in ylove. Being a woman, she felt everything concretely and with stranger sense of being in touch with life,

"Abstraction has no meaning for me. Each entity must take on

Some sorts of shape that I can touch....that infact can thrill me

with a touch."

Her long cherished love was not revealed until the last stage of Sahir's life. After the death of Sahir, Imroz, the painter, entered in her lonely life and she accepted him as her ultimate man.

Amrita Pritam narrates the public side of her live as a written part and puts her career in the text of her autobiography her role as a beloved finds her womanly passion irresistible and inevitable. In patriarchy, one expects woman to present herself as being fulfilling the man-oriented roles. For woman writer, the act of writing autobiography carrier a dark burden on the one hand, they have to maintain the Aesthetic interest and the subjective shades of self on other hand.

It is very important to notice that A.P. didn't offer much space rather ignored the details of her marital life and relationship with her husband. Amrita's silent about her husband one in-laws in autobiography carrier a double sense of the experience she had in marriage. She creates an impression that she hates him enough not of mention even his name in her life story. The reasons why she had to marry seems to rooted in socio-familal compulsions, as she states.

"I had to repay debt to society....but speaking for myself,

I surely feel the weight of doubt."

She communicates that marriage was a social bondage forced upon all women of her times.

Amrita Pritam vision of womanhood is so clear and without inhibitions/. Her mind was communicative in its perception and she could visualize the male mind through her characters, she could also sympathize with their agonies. She never denied the gender orientation harshly as a feminist world. The recognition of gendered experiences and that of gender roles was felt by her as an artist more profoundly than any common being, she seemed to offer some feminist implications in her philosophized observations of woman's identity and existence, she states.

"The only difference between male and female mind is that, their

Drawbacks are different."

Confession, complaints, cries, dreams all these things crates her own credo as a literary artist, as one who has lived very truly.

## CONCLUSION

'The Revenue Stamp' is shades by her romantic idealism, which is self-imagined. In the world of self-forgets the external drudgery of life, and visions that inspire her creativity. The Revenue Stamp conceals woman's courage of consideration and psychological insight yet believes in the intuitive and suggestive dreams.

## REFERENCES:

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