



INDIAN WRITERS AND POETS

AMRITA PRITAM



LIFE HISTORY

Amrita Pritam was born in year 1919 in Gujranwala, Punjab in undivided India. She was the only child and had inherited love for the written word from her father, Kartar Singh who was a school teacher and a poet himself. Since childhood, Amrita questioned religious dogmas and redundant traditions practiced in her family that later on reflected in her writings. When she was all of 11 years of age, her mother passed away. It is said that losing a parent at such a tender age made her melancholy and she took to writing to find some solace from her grief.

In Modern Indian literature, amidst plethora of male prolific writers stood alone a woman whose writings were revolutionary of that time. She is none other than Amrita Pritam, the poetess who famously evoked medieval Sufi poet Waris Shah to wake up from his grave and look at the condition of women in

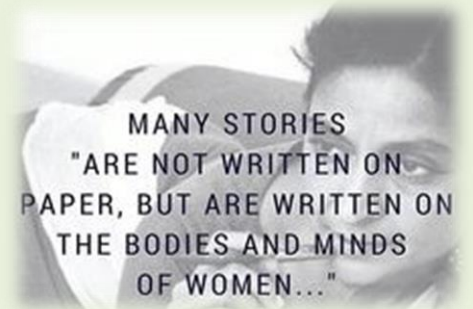


his motherland. The poem still echoes in the hearts of all those who underwent needless suffering due to Partition of India on the eve of Independence in 1947. The poem "Ajj Aakhan Waris Shah Nu" made Amrita Pritam as one of the most iconic women writers in the 20th century India. Her upbringing reflected in her writings that were courageous and bold in their expression. Majority of Amrita Pritam's writings are in Punjabi and Hindi languages. As a writer, Amrita Pritam was an abashed spokesperson of women's rights and her challenges. Her work at every possible occasion challenged patriarchy at its head. She witnessed the horrors being inflicted upon innocent people, young and old and particularly women. She argued about the insanity of the aftermath of the partition and its victims on both sides of the border.



HER MAJOR WORKS

Amrita Pritam being a prolific writer published more than 100 books in her lifetime including collection of her poetry, novels, fiction, biographies and essays. Her first anthology of poems 'Amrit Leheran' (Immortal Waves) was published in year 1936 when she was just 16.



By 1943, she got six collections of her poems already published. In the beginning, Amrita used to write poems of romance and love. But gradually she got tilted towards 'Progressive Writers' Movement, which was a literary movement in the pre-partition British India that gained much credence.

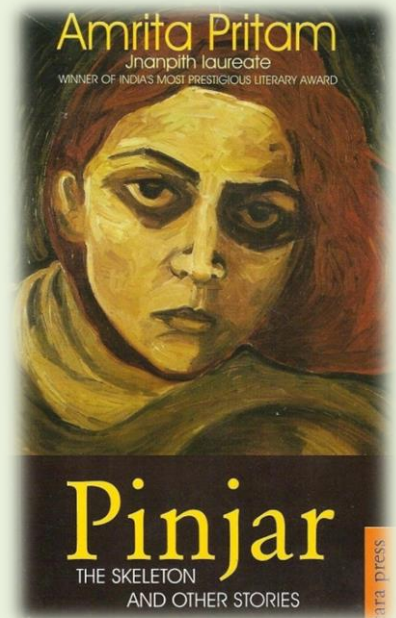
Aj aakhan Waris Shah nun kīton kabraan vichchon bol,

Complete the next two lines of the poem

.....

In year 1944, she penned down a collection of poems called the 'Lok Peer' meaning the anguish of people which was based on the after-effects of the Bengal Famine of 1943. Gradually one can see a smooth transition in her writings as she freely expressed herself without any inhibition whatsoever.

She also had a brief stint with the Lahore Radio Station in mid-1940s. Later she worked at All India Radio in Delhi till 1961 in Punjabi Service. In year 1950, Collecting all these experiences gave her the idea of penning down her immortal novel 'Pinjar' in she poetically described the anguish of being a Woman and what she had to go through in the name of honour in their own families and community at large. This novel was later adapted on screen in a feature film and won many hearts. Her other works include 'Aksharon kay Saayee' (Shadows of Words); Agyat Ka Nimantran' (Call of the Unknown); Kala Gulab' (Black Rose); 'Kaal Chetna' (Time Consciousness), and the "Rasidi Ticket' (The Revenue Stamp).



Awards & Achievements

Amrita Pritam won the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for her work, "Sunehey" in year 1956. In year 1982, she was also bestowed with the Bhartiya Jnanpith Award for "Kagaj te Canvas" which is one of India's highest literary awards. She also received the Padma Vibhushan in year 2004 which is India's second highest civilian award.

LEGACY

Her writings were a blunt comment on the social apathy of the times. The emotion of hopelessness, anger, frustration, grief and sadness coupled with shame and horror whoever partook in the Partition. Through her writings that were exclusive on women's issues, she became a voice for women in Punjabi literature. Her writings have made her one of the leading champions of women's rights in India. Many of her works have been translated into several regional and foreign languages. She breathed her last in year 2005.



ACTIVITY

1. WRITE A SUMMARY OF ANY BOOK OF AMRITA PRITAM. GIVE REASONS FOR YOUR CHOICE.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

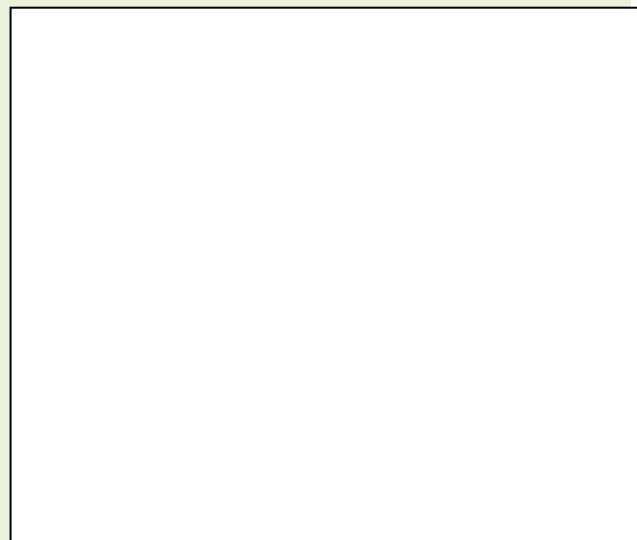
2. WHAT INSPIRED AMRITA PRITAM TO WRITE ABOUT WOMEN IN HER NOVELS?

.....
.....
.....
.....

3. PUT YOUR WRITER'S HAT AND WRITE YOUR OWN STORY.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4. MAKE A SKETCH OF YOUR FAVOURITE AUTHOR.



Credit

<http://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/amrita-pritam-5432.php>

<https://www.poemhunter.com/amrita-pritam/biography/>