

Uprooted and Silenced: An Analysis of the Film Adaptation of Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar*

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Abstract

During the communal disruptions of 1947 women bore witness to the most exquisite exhibition of communal derangement, as Partition violence led to the uprooting of thousands of women. Bereft of the cocoon of their family, women were abducted, raped and traded off like commodities. Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* is a narrative that depicts this aching misfortune of the uprooted women and churns the insides of its witnesses. This film adaptation voices out the horrors suffered by thousands of nameless women in silence. This paper brings out the other side of India's Partition, which is full of agonizing experiences of countless women who were unfortunately uprooted during the communal clashes of the Partition.

Keywords: Exile; Partition; Silence; Uprooted; Women.

Exile [or uprooting] is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience.... [I]ts essential sadness can never be surmounted. (Said, "Reflections on Exile" 173)

Introduction

The viewers are provided with the background as the film begins. The socio-political circumstances of the country are introduced to the audience in a sombre tone. Narrator conveys how the "cruel monsoon" of "1946" had "created" communal "havoc" in the "country" (*Pinjar* 0:03:30). How Jinnah's call of 'Direct Action' ended up in the blood-spattered event of 'The Calcutta Killings' and 'The Week of Long Knives' in the Bengal Province. How the echo of Muslim League's 'Direct Action' on 16 August 1946 reverberated in other parts of the country as well. And how, it ushered the cycle of communal violence in the country. All these events weakened the "emotional cord" between Muslims and non-Muslims bringing the

country on the verge of division (0:03:36). The way “sparks” of hatred induced by religion were “hidden” in the “embers” of past (0:03:40). At some places “the nation was already on fire,” while at other places “it was on the verge of being set afire,” even “Punjab was not untouched” with it (0:03:50). “That was just the beginning of the partition of the country” (0:03:55). Right after this introductory note, a killing is carried out by some Muslim rioters and soon the entire pathway is covered with dead bodies oozing blood from their deadly wounds. These dead bodies included “innocent children who had not even learnt their alphabets,” even the young and innocent “were thrust into the fire of anger and hatred” (5:15-5:20). But the worst sufferers of this madness were the women who were abducted, uprooted and forced into exile, away from all that they held close to their hearts. This paper attempts to bring out the agony of such countless women through the characters of Puro and Lajo who were uprooted, violated and exiled to undergo unimaginable suffering.

Discussion

The film *Pinjar* depicts the life experiences of a young girl Puro who is soon to be married to Ramchand. But unfortunately, she is abducted by a man of other religion Rashid, with the intention to settle an old family rivalry. Since Puro has lived with her abductor, her parents refuse to accept her back in the family due to the fear of social ostracization. To hide it from the society, the family arranges the marriage of Kirpal (Ramchand’s cousin) and Rajjo (Puro’s sister) in place of Puro and Ramchand. In these circumstances, Rashid imposes marriage on Puro since he knows she has nowhere else to go to. Despite having feelings for Ramchand and hating Rashid for her misery, Puro is forced to accept him as her husband. This marriage converts her from Puro to Hamida, further causing her great pain. The backdrop is of the times of Partition where many women faced similar fate. Towards the end, the film depicts the abduction of Ramchand’s sister, Lajo who also happens to be Puro’s sister-in-law. This abduction is caused due to the Partition violence going on in the Punjab province. By displaying great bravery and determination, Puro with the help of Rashid successfully rescues and rehabilitates Lajo, undoing her uprooting.

Paul Tabori in his work *The Anatomy of Exile* describes an uprooted and exiled individual as, “a person compelled to leave or remain outside his country of origin on account of well-founded fear of persecution or for reasons of race, religion, nationality, or political opinion” (27). This uprooted being “considers ... exile” to be “temporary,” despite the fact that

“it may last a lifetime” (27). Therefore, s/he “hop[es] to return” to his/her roots but is “unable or unwilling to” due to the “persist[ing]” “factors” (27). “The term exile refers to” both—an uprooted “person” as well as “the state of being” uprooted (*Alias, Diasporic Angst for Home* 47). Within this frame of reference Oliva M. Espin in her article remarks that:

[T]he loss experienced by an uprooted person encompasses not only the big and obvious losses of country, a way of life and family. The pain of uprootedness is also activated in subtle forms by the everyday absence of familiar smells, familiar foods, [and] familiar routines for doing the small tasks of daily life. It is the lack of what has been termed “the average expectable environment” (Hartmann, 1946) which can become a constant reminder of what is not there anymore. It is the loss of this “average expectable environment” that can be most disorienting and most disruptive [thing in] the person’s [life]. (13)

Hannah Arendt in “We Refugees” echoes this opinion saying that, uprooted and exiled beings that have “lost” their “homes,” also lose “the familiarity of daily life” (qtd. in Dubey 92). For them, uprooting brought an exile that caused the loss of “...the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings” (92). And this experience of being exiled or uprooted “is a condition of terminal loss,” “that is produced by human beings for other human beings” and is “like death but without death’s ultimate mercy” (Said, “Reflections on Exile” 174). Thus, the existence of uprooted individuals becomes the embodiment of a “crippling sorrow of estrangement” that consumes their entire lives (Said 173).

The uprooted women during Partition violence were trapped in conditions that prevented them from going back to their homes. For such women, the “return” to their roots was almost “impossible,” owing to the prevailing socio-political circumstances (Dubey 91). Rushdie’s comments in *Imaginary Homelands*, regarding the ire of an exile/ uprooted being holds significance in this context. In his opinion, their “position ... is one of ‘profound uncertainties’ [as they are] at home” neither there (the home of the past) nor here (the home of the present); their idea of home is entwined with complexity and confusion for the reason that it keeps oscillating between the past and the present (qtd. in Dubey 98). In Edward Said’s words, an “exile sees things both in terms of what has been left behind and what is actual here and now...” (qtd. in Dubey 98). It is this “double perspective” that pushes them in “isolation” leading to their suffering (98). Thus, it becomes difficult for them to root themselves in their present.

Uprooted beings carry within them a unique amalgamation of past recollections and death-like loss which bears the sweetness of the past as well as the bitterness of loss. This is the fate of someone who is uprooted there is no ray of hope for such a person. Uprooted individuals are all alone in their grief of being forcefully removed from their home. They do not have anyone to share their pain because those around them have not been uprooted which is why no one can understand their pain. For this reason, Rashid conveniently declares Puro's fate that she will have to marry him. So that Rashid can be intimate with her, this would rid him off the sin of forcing himself on an innocent and unwilling lady. This would also aid in pruning down his guilt of uprooting Puro to a certain extent. Puro does not have many options left with her. Shunned by her parents, she has only two options; either she can marry Rashid against her wishes or she can commit suicide.

Puro's parents are greatly sensitive and caring towards their children. But their compassion towards their family has acquired a "possessive character" (Nancy, "Female identity in Pritam's Pinjar" 46). However, this extreme love combined with possessiveness has contributed to their weakness. Their character seems to have been taken over by this weakness that forces them to sacrifice Puro for the future of their other children. It is for this reason Mohanlal (Puro's father) takes the decision of getting Rajjo married, who is now their eldest daughter of marriageable age. He reasons with his son, Trilok, saying that:

If [Rajjo] does not get married [in place of Puro, and people get a whiff of what actually happened to her] ... the entire society will ostracise us. Let this crisis blow over ... dare not step out of this house, otherwise I will kill myself ... [kill me, burn me down,] [a]fter that, you do what you like. My son, I beg you. Please support your father ... After your younger sister gets married ... [you can] do whatever you like. I beg of you. Please save my honour. (*Pinjar* 43:12-44:54)

Puro's father is terrified that if Puro's truth is revealed to the society, their entire family will have to face similar fate. They would be isolated by the society. Like Puro, they too would be uprooted due to the stringent societal codes that call for a strict compliance. It is this fear of being banished, being exiled by the society that terrifies Puro's father forcing his son to not report Puro's abduction to the police. Trilok feels humiliated and utterly helpless when his parents beg him for the first time in his entire life. He is forced to comply with their wishes. Thus, the chance of undoing Puro's

uprooting goes in vain. Another chance of bringing her back to her home, to her roots, is lost. And her suffering continues.

Puro laments her fate at being uprooted from her family. Her suffering is greatly heightened due to her inability to understand as to why she is being punished by an unknown man despite causing him no harm. She is immersed in this misery when her abductor Rashid comes home (53:52). Puro is sitting under the sky in the courtyard, shivering and crying due to this forced exile. Her face is a mere shadow of its former self. She appears to be withered like a plant that has been mercilessly torn from its roots with great force. She is suffering due to the forceful disintegration from her family. Her identity, her entire being is mutilated by this sudden loss of her roots. Puro's uprooting by Rashid can be expressed as follows:

...the state of [her] being in exile ... [has] disrupt[ed] [her] sense of home and belonging. It [has] uproot[ed] [her] from a familiar environment and cultural practices. It is a state of yearning and nostalgia for a way of life and a sense of loss. [The idea of] exile deal[s] with the [sense] of absence and longing, [it makes the victim's life] devoid of fun and laughter. [It is a song of] separation and despair, [of] poverty and [loss]. (Lalthlamuanpuui and Shuchi, "Landays: Women's Secrets - At Home and In Exile" 176-77)

Just like an uprooted plant is devoid of the life sustaining nutrition, an uprooted individual is left craving for his/her past familial warmth that provides physical and social security, along with the psychological sense of being at ease.

It is this absence of ease in Rashid's house that is torturing Puro to no ends. Rashid sees Puro suffering and questions her as to, "why [she is] torturing [herself]" (*Pinjar* 0:53:59). He tells her to, "Come inside [the house] and eat something [because she has] not eaten anything in last two days" (0:53:59). This makes it quite evident that he is unable to understand her plight. In fact, he reveals his lustful intentions towards her conveying that he wants her to satiate his carnal desires. This episode is not a simple occurrence of a man abusing his power but has a deeper meaning. His words are indicative of the fate of an uprooted woman, the destiny of a woman devoid of all forms of social security. Not only does she lose autonomy over her body but also has to painfully part ways with her sense of self and individual integrity. On knowing his intentions Puro is scared to the core, she is utterly miserable at her misfortune of being uprooted from her near perfect existence. Her kidnapper who also happens to be a

spectator of her sorrow is alien to this experience of uprooting. Therefore, he is far removed from her emotional and psychological turbulence.

Meanwhile, Rashid is all set to marry Puro against her wishes. He brings her a red dress, instructing her to get ready in the morning for their marriage. He tells her that, "Tomorrow morning you [must] get ready. The [maulvi] will come [and] solemnize our marriage" (*Pinjar* 0:59:30). While Puro falls at his feet begging for mercy, she surrenders her leftover self-respect before him. But being in the position of power, he determines her destiny declaring that, "Look Puro ... Don't burden me with unnecessary sins. I swear upon Allah. I can't see you crying ... [In my] [e]ntire life... I will not give you any cause of complain" (0:59:35-1:00:01). He further goes on to explain the ancestral enmity between the two clans and the reason of her abduction. He confesses his love to her saying that, "Puro, the very first day I saw you... God is my witness, I fell in love with you" (1:01:21-1:01:30).

Rashid's actions are quite atypical in nature. Puro's beauty and virtue leaves him spellbound, and dazed by her enchanting naiveté he decides to acquire her. Thus, his obsession coupled with peer pressure led him to kidnap Puro. Puro to him was perhaps like a beautiful rose that he plucked out, desiring to possess its beauty and fragrance. Her uprooting ensured that anyone could declare his authority over her. Perhaps the destiny of an uprooted woman is such that she is rendered "as a symbol of sex for the pleasure of" her abductor (Nancy 47). Puro's grief forces Rashid to declare his love once again, he promises her that he "... will lay all the comforts of the world at [her] feet" (*Pinjar* 1:02:02). But all these promises of material comforts and wealth hold no significance in the life of an uprooted being. All she desires is to go back to her roots, to her family, to her loved ones. In this context, Lalithlamuanpuii and Shuchi in "*Landays: Women's Secrets - At Home and In Exile*," quote Edward Said's words from "The Mind of Winter" that, "[e]xile is" that "unhealable rift" which forcefully severs "a human being" from its "native place, between the self and its true home" (176). The "essential sadness of" this "break" is so expansive that it "can never be surmounted" (176). It is for this reason that Puro begs Rashid to allow her to meet her mother one last time.

Puro: Let me meet my mother just once. (*Pinjar* 1:02:12)

Rashid: Good soul! Now there is no place for you in that house. No Hindu from their clan will even touch water of the Shah family. Puro you have lived in my house for ... 15 days. (1:02:15-1:02:20)

Puro: But... I have only touched food and water in your house. (1:02:27)

Rashid: Who will believe this? Tell me who will Puro? ... But I, as a gentleman... I will marry you first. (1:02:29-1:02:35)

Despite this, Puro still believes that she can return to her roots. And her family would still accept her with open arms. Therefore, seeing Rashid deep in sleep she runs away in the middle of the night. With the desire to reunite with her family, she runs towards her home. Once she reaches her place, she and her mother in each other's embrace cry their heart out. Despite 15 days of her kidnapping, the pain of her uprooting is still raw in their hearts. But, to her utter misfortune Rashid's words come true and her father's words seal her fate of a perpetual exile.

Mohanlal: My daughter [it is] your [bad] luck [that] we have nothing to offer. In a short while [your abductor's] men will reach here and kill all of us. (*Pinjar* 1:06:33-1:06:50)

Puro: Father, take me to Amritsar... Take me to Amritsar. (1:06:55)

Mohanlal: Where will I keep you? Who will marry you? Your religion is gone... [this life] is desecrated. At this time whatever we say they will squeeze out every drop of our blood. (1:06:58-1:07:12)

Puro: In that case you kill me with your own hands... kill me... Mother kill me with your own hands. (1:07:15-1:07:18)

Puro's Mother: I wish you were dead at birth. Just go away from here. Go away now... go. [Try to understand my child, those people] must be [on the way]. Your father and your brother will be annihilated. They will kill us all. My daughter go... we gave birth to you... now do us this favour. (1:07:20-1:07:45)

The heart wrenching cries of Puro churns the insides of the viewers. In a helpless state of longing she smears on her forehead, the soil outside her house. Only this dust, only this soil is what she can claim now. This dirt, this soil is the only souvenir that she is able to claim, the only token of the past that she can possess. It is the sole reminder of her roots that she can have after being uprooted because her family has nothing to offer her, neither refuge nor death. This harsh reality breaks her down. In this context, it becomes essential to reiterate Devika Chawla's words regarding

the uprooted women:

For these abducted ... women, home and family were often the first betrayers of their identities, their selfhood, and their bodied being in the world and home.

But ... this picture reflects a mere fraction of the [agonizing] experiences of those women who could not be saved, who were forced to live out their lives as converts to [another religion] with abductee families, or who lived essentially homeless lives because their natal or marital families disallowed their return into the familial fold. (*Home, Uprooted* 150)

Puro's grief knew no bound as she internalizes this reality. She is perpetually uprooted, and can never return home, in fact, she no longer has a home. Her home, her roots, her relations are all lost forever. The internalization of this tragedy leaves her completely astounded. And in a state of trance she walks towards the well, probably thinking of ending her misery. But Rashid finds her and takes her home.

The next day Puro is married to Rashid, where the viewers are acquainted with the new identity of the uprooted Puro. Her marriage to Rashid has been solemnized in the name of Hamida. This is symbolic of her abductor's attempt at pushing her towards a new identity, a new home, and new roots. Once again her wishes, her happiness are not taken into account. Soon they leave the village of Rattoval to settle in Sakkadali village (1:12:05). We witness gradual distancing of Puro from her origin, from her roots. And she welcomes this gradual distancing through tears of pain and longing (1:12:45).

The next scene brings out the utterly miserable existence of an uprooted woman, Pagli. She is a mentally unstable character who is dressed in rags with matted hair, living on streets. Her first visual in the film adaptation presents her to the audience in a completely dishevelled state. She is running away from children who are pelting stones at her. The viewers are shown the wretched existence of a woman devoid of roots, of family. A life that is not granted protection by the norms of the society. She is shown begging for food. People bolt their doors at her appearance. She is denied entry into households. Only Puro shows her kindness and offers her some food, while she is hungrily chewing her own dirty clothes (1:31:51). Pagli becomes the victim of an animal's carnal desire who sees her body as a means of satiating his sexual appetite. An uprooted woman who is bereft of familial and societal protection becomes an easy target of such barbaric

men who are like hungry wolves waiting to devour the innocence and body of young women. For such men, women are subjects of exploitation to be abused and discarded. This unbearable injustice is brilliantly brought out in Puro's words when she questions, "What sort of man must he be who" had committed such a horrible act? Pagli "had no beauty." All that she possessed was "a body." A body "[t]hat" had "no senses." She was "[j]ust a mangle of bones," a mad cage of flesh and bones. "The vultures have feasted on that too" (*Pinjar* 1:32:40-1:33:00).

Puro's uprooting is a gradually progressing and painful process. Another phase in the process is when Rashid brings home an unknown man to tattoo her new name, Hamida, on her arm (1:15:09). While she extends her arm for being inked, thinking that her original identity as Puro would remain intact. But to her surprise, Rashid is hell bent on painfully distancing her from her roots, from her identity, from her self. Despite understanding how painful it would be for her, despite claiming to love her, he subjects her to such immense agony. This is also indicative of the fact that Rashid desires to forcefully root her into his family, his culture after uprooting her against her wishes. The pain of forceful uprooting and re-rooting against her desire is reflective in her tears that surface from the inner most quarters of her heart into her eyes right when the new identity of Hamida is being imprinted on her arm. While her lips are sealed her eyes cry out at the injustice perpetrated on her (1:15:15-1:15:32). The dichotomy is brought out in the very next scene when her brother Trilok uses all his might to search for Puro's whereabouts but he has no inkling that his beloved sister is forcefully converted into Hamida (1:15:45). Puro tries her best to wash off the name, Hamida from her arm but to no avail. Her uprooting from her home as Puro, her parents' refusal to accept her back, her marriage with Rashid, and the tattoo on her arm, all these incidents en masse sealed her fate. Despite all her efforts she cannot undo this sad reality of her life.

The anguish of an uprooted woman is aggravated by the fact that no one around her seems to realize the intensity of her agony. An uprooted being is cocooned in her own misery that is invisible to those around her. And those who do realize it tend to overlook her pain, as if it is a very normal day-to-day thing. This is clearly brought out by the conversation between Rashid and Puro:

Rashid: I feel you are very upset these days. You get up in the middle of the night. You have lost your sleep... your appetite
(*Pinjar* 1:22:05-1:22:12)

Puro: No, everything is fine (1:22:14)

Rashid: How can you say that? You eat once a day. And that too is not enough. You take neither milk nor curd or any butter. For what are you punishing me? (1:22:16-1:22:30)

Puro: Even otherwise, what good have you done to me? (1:22:35)

The next day, wet-nurse informs them that Puro is four months pregnant. While Rashid is overjoyed at this recent development, Puro completely changes his demeanour by sharing her inner most thoughts with him that are still plagued with the pain of her uprooting. She tells him that, "I am carrying the burden of your sin since the last 4 months" (1:23:53). And for the first time, Rashid seems to have grasped the intensity of Puro's pain and her hatred for his actions that have resulted in her being uprooted. He is left in tears to share the agony he has inflicted on her.

Rashid fully understands Puro's pain when she uproots his seed from her womb by deliberately carrying heavy weight that leads to her miscarriage. Rashid undergoes the pain of the estrangement of one's loved one, the uprooting of a family member's existence by the miscarriage from his child. He is thus left to repent on the sins that he has committed against an innocent soul, Puro. What earlier was Puro's pain now is transferred in the fate of Rashid.

Puro's painful fate is shared by Lajo as well. Lajo gets kidnapped by a Muslim man Allahditta while migrating to India with her family. She too suffers the pain of being uprooted and violated. Puro gets hold of this information after meeting Ramchand in the entourage of Hindu refugees travelling to India. She decides to rescue Lajo and rid her of her miserable existence as someone's keep. Puro with the help of Rashid is successful in locating Lajo. Lajo's cheerful demeanour is drastically converted after her abduction. Her face is filled with sadness and tears. And her small and slow footsteps are indicative of the pain she is in due to sexual atrocities perpetrated on her, a fate that was common for abducted women in the wake of Partition violence. Her face is extremely pale and she is completely silent, unlike her previous jovial self. Seeing her condition, Puro's eyes are filled with tears and she decides to end her sister-in-law's misery. Together, Puro and Rashid successfully rescue Lajo from her abductor's place. However, Allahditta gets suspicious of Puro being a Hindu. It is at this crucial moment that Puro makes use of her wit and shows her tattoo to him so as to prove her Muslim identity. She thus saves herself and

Rashid from being implicated.

Lajo and Puro's conversation brings to the fore the moral dilemma of these uprooted women. They are the innocent victims of sexual violation; however, the atrocity perpetrated on such women is so massive that it thwarts them from attempting to go back to their homes.

Puro: I pity my mother. Her daughter is as good as dead... and now even [her] daughter-in-law. When you go there tell my mother to see my face [just once in this lifetime]. (*Pinjar* 2:46:55-2:47:00)

Lajo: [Me?] Where will I go? (2:47:12)

Puro: You will go there, to your husband, to your brother. (2:47:16)

Lajo: No sister! I am finished [as good as dead], now who will accept me? (2:47:22)

Puro: No Lajo! As long as I am alive. I will not allow injustice [meted out on] you. What is your fault [in it]? (2:47:23- 2:47:29)

Lajo: What was your fault? Your [family has] not called you till now. (2:47:30-2:47:33)

Puro: That is a different matter altogether ... at that time, I was alone. My parents did not have the courage to face the people and they [uprooted] their parental emotions. Today not one but everyone is [suffering]. (2:47:35-2:47:58)

Lajo: No sister ... I know ... Nobody will come to take me [back home]. (2:48:05-2:48:08)

Puro: I assure you your brother will [definitely come] ... and he will take you back. Today nobody is complaining everybody is accepting back his or her sisters and daughters. (2:48:09-2:48:18)

Lajo: Earlier they were crying for one. Now they will be crying for two. I will not go anywhere. How will I face them? I will serve you and eat whatever's there. (2:48:30-2:48:45)

Puro: Don't humiliate me Lajo. This is your own house, but, they will definitely accept you. I will somehow make them accept you. (2:48:48-2:48:50)

This conversation is indicative of the intensity of the pain of uprooted women. They have borne the brunt of the 'enemy' community and are now converted into the symbols of shame for their family and community. They suffer due to the double yoke of communal hatred and uprooting. Thousands of such women were violated, mutilated, humiliated, and forcefully impregnated during the turbulent times of Partition. And their fateful misery remains unknown, locked behind their sealed lips. This silence on their suffering comes out in their next conversation.

Lajo: Are you happy here? (*Pinjar* 2:48:58)

Puro: After the first crime Rashid committed he has not uttered a single foul word to me. If he was not with me, how could I have traced you? (2:49:00-2:49:15)

Lajo: [Tell me sister] Do you still love my brother? (2:49:38)

Puro: It is late in the night go to sleep (2:49:48)

The conversation mentioned above shows the complexity of human emotions involved in the case of an uprooted woman. Her refusal of voicing out her true feelings is an honest acceptance of her wounded self that is still carrying the legacy of her uprooting. This acquaints the viewers with the challenges of completely forgetting the trauma of being uprooted, which is why despite living with Rashid for so long Puro still craves for her family and has feelings for Ramchand. She dodges away Lajo's question because she can neither grasp the naked truth nor utter a blatant lie. This happens because there is a "knot in her heart" that "is accompanied with pain, the pain of an ephemeral and everlasting discovery" that in spite of the time her wounds have not healed (*Inhabiting the Other* 29). That is the fate of an uprooted woman. She can neither voice out her pain nor can she completely heal herself from it. Thus, the uprooted woman is forced to shun her feelings of love, pain as well as hate. She "is exiled from her" own "self," she has "exiled" herself "from her true feelings" in an attempt to avoid more torment (27). She is forced to ignore her longing for her home, family, and her people despite the fact that a return is very unlikely. Hence, the experience of "uprootedness can have" a "profound psychological impact" on the victim (Espin 18). Therefore, it becomes significant for a researcher to examine the life experiences of uprooted women, particularly during the communal riots of 1947. This would aid in our understanding of the impact of uprooting, predominantly on women.

"But like a flowing river, life too finds its own course" (*Pinjar* 5:25-5:30).

And ultimately Puro accepts her fate of uprootedness and forgives Rashid for his past sins, because he has honestly repented for his wrongdoings and has proven his sincerity by putting his life at risk only to save an unknown woman (Lajo) at Puro's behest. His incessant attempts at reconciliation move Puro to great extent. Consequently, Puro decides to remain back in Pakistan with Rashid as his wife—Hamida. She asks her brother Trilok to promise her that he would, "[n]ever ill-treat Lajo," Trilok complies and requests her to return (2:55:55). But Puro, who has now accepted the identity of Hamida denies it. She tells her brother that, "Lajo is coming home. [Just] think [that] in her Puro has also come [home]" (2:57:44-2:57:55). She has ultimately found her roots with Rashid, as his wife. She has rooted herself in Rashid's household, his culture, his nation. And now "Rashid" is her "only ... truth. For [her] this is [her] home. This is [her] abode" (2:59:40-2:59:52). This is why she says to her brother: "Whether a girl is Hindu or Muslim, if she is rehabilitated in life... [assume] that [it] is [the] rehabilitation of Puro and her soul." (3:00:30-3:00:42).

Conclusion

This paper focused on bringing out the suffering of a "woman in exile," who lives "like a fish out of her elements," missing "her familiar surroundings..." (Lalthlamuanpuui and Shuchi 177). She finds herself to be "a lost stranger," one who is "helpless" and "incomprehensible" in an "obscure corner of earth" (Goorall qtd. in Said "Reflections on Exile 179-80). Her fate is to live in isolation, carrying the anguish of being uprooted. This anguish of hers is, in turn, treated with utter indifference which Yanko Goorall describes to be "the supreme disaster of loneliness and despair" (qtd. in Said 180). Through the characters of Puro and Lajo, the aim is to voice out the hauntingly harrowing experience of uprooting which otherwise remains incompressible. This helps us to understand the tragic fate of the uprooted women in an utterly cruel and indifferent world which overlooks the pain of being severed from one's roots. Thus, this paper has attempted to break such silence and bring out their agonizing experiences and emotions. Another rare aspect discussed in the paper is the painful existence of uprooted women that provide them with an intense impetus to overcome their grief and undo their suffering, and at the same time assist other grief-stricken people. As witnessed in Puro's case, who in spite of her own afflictions successfully undoes her sister-in-law's uprooting. She painstakingly makes an effort to locate Lajo's whereabouts and persuades Rashid to rescue a helpless woman from eternal suffering. It is her character's strength that motivates her to fight against the injustice meted out on Lajo.

“Only [the] names of the protagonists,” in this narrative “are make-believe, as for the rest... it’s the naked truth” (*Pinjar* 5:30-5:35), and this hard truth was the reality of thousands of young women in the wake of Partition. For this reason, it becomes significant to break the silence on the suffering of such countless souls and discuss the barbarity meted out on them, so that such barbaric madness is never repeated in future.

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