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**CHAPTER: IV**  
**AMRITA PRITAM'S**  
**THE REVENUE STAMP:**  
**A CANDID EVIDENCE OF**  
**INDIVIDUALITY**

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CHAPTER: IV
Amrita Pritam's
THE REVENUE STAMP:
A candid evidence of individuality

**“There was a grief I smoked in silence, like a cigarette
Only a few poems fell out of the ash I flicked from it”¹**

Amrita Pritam has been variously described as the goddess of defiance, a rebel and recalcitrant and even a revolutionary born in the western part of Punjab, presently in Pakistan in 1919 to a Sikh family, Amrita started her writing career at the age of 16. At the time of Partition she moved to New Delhi which she made her second home. She began to write in Hindi as opposed to Punjabi, her mother tongue. She worked until 1961 for All India Radio. She divorced her husband Pritam sing in 1960 and dedicated her later part of life to writing.

For about half a century, Punjabi literature was predominantly under the progressive movement. Amrita's first collection of Punjabi poems was published in 1935 when she married an editor Pritam sing to whom she was engaged in early childhood. Be it *Amrita Leharan*, *KagazTe Kanvas* (1970, for which she was awarded the Jnanpith award), *Suneherey* (1950), *Kal Chetna*, *Agyat ka Nimantran* or any other works, Amrita Pritam never failed to provoke readers with her rebellious thoughts.

Amrita Pritam is the first woman Punjabi poet. She is the first woman recipient of the Sahitya Akademi award for her collection of poems 'Sunehere'. In 1969, she received Padma shree from the president of India. In 1982 she received Bhartiya Jnanpith award for her collection of poems *Kagaz te Kanvas*. Recently, a film has been made from her novel *Pinjjar* (1950). She has more than 75 books to her credit.

Renowned poet novelist and short story writer, Amrita Pritam, 86, passed away on Monday 31st October 2005 at her Hauz khas residence in New Delhi.

After the legendary poet Sitakanta Mohapatra, Amrita Pritam's works have been translated in English, Albanian, Bulgarian, French, Polish, Russian, Spanish and all the 21 Indian languages. Amrita Pritam has been widely read, nationally and internationally. Very few writers have earned this distinction. The nuances of Punjabi and Hindi, so eminently and intuitively exploited by Amrita will continue to be a challenge for translators. Amrita Pritam's life story *The Revenue Stamp* has been also translated in many languages including English. Krishna Gorowara has translated *The Revenue Stamp* with so much precision that it gives the fervour of the original.

In contemporary Punjabi literature Amrita Pritam is an indisputable phenomenon who has no parallel. Her autobiography *Rashidi Ticket, The Revenue Stamp* first published in 1976, is an honest chronicle written with warmth and truthfulness. It may be compared to Dom Moraes' *My Son's father*, which has been described as 'a minor classic' by Stephen Spender. However, critic Suresh Kohli considered *Rashidi Ticket* as nothing more than just a 'half baked onion', for it had none of the things you wanted to know about her life, her relationship with Sahir Ludhianvi and then with Imroz. She was known as a ravishing beauty in Lahore. Yet, in 'Rashidi Tickat' there was little to no account of her early years".²

Unfortunately, this too is quite controversial. Once, the fate of this life story was about to be hermetically sealed. Later, it appeared in both the Hindi and English versions. Retrospectively, when Amrita Pritam disclosed her plans to write an autobiography to Khushwant Singh, he commented: "what is there to your life? Just an incident or two...you could use the back of a revenue stamp to write it"³

In brief prologue to *The Revenue Stamp*, Amrita Pritam 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”.⁴

Amrita Pritam’s autobiography is a master piece. She is basically an artist. Her artistic sensibility continually comes to the fore front in her autobiography. Through her artistic touch she has revealed herself as a writer as well as a woman. Time and again we find the illustrations from her poems in her life-story. Her vision of life is broad and all pervasive. Each page of her life story appears an individual poem.

An autobiography is an account of the life of its writer built up by him/her with the help of his/her memory. Amrita Pritam recalls her memory and begins her life story thus:

“Is it Doomsday? Moments of my life in the womb of time lived a while and after Time’s span, seemingly entombed are today alive again, stalk past me... However all the graves yielded to resurrect those moments? It must indeed be Doomsday...” (Page 1)⁵

Thus, one can perceive the intensity of Amrita’s memory coming down the lane. The very title of the first chapter ‘Resurrecting Time’ sounds very artistic. We dare not to expect a factual record from such a chapter. In a very poetic manner Pritam exposes her birth and parentage to us.

Digging up her memory, she narrates that she is a child of enterprising Sadhu Nand Baba and mother Rajbibi. In very sparkling terms Pritam depicts her family history. Through this history we are

bound to accept that revolutionary spirit is inherited. Let's have a look at this hereditary revolutionary spirit in Pritam's family:

Amrita's father had four brothers and a sister. Two of his brothers had died. One Gopalsingh forsook his family for his love for drinking. The other Hakim Singh became a 'Sadhu'. Hence, Nand knew only the elder sister Hakko. This elder sister was also a bewitching creature. Having married a person called Bella Singh, she realised that they were not made for each other. She returned to the parental home, fasted for forty days and renounced the world to become a 'Sadhvi'. Amrita's father Nand followed his sister's path and became a 'Sadhu'. He renounced his forefathers' legacy and joined saint Dayal's Ashram. Mean while; Nand's uncle had betrothed him to a girl in Amritsar. Nand broke off the engagement and began writing poems steeped in the spirit of renunciation.

Amrita's mother; Rajbibi too flung away all the social codes of conduct. She was from Monga village of Gujarat and was married to soldier through the barter system. The soldier never returned from the army and Rajbibi's life turned out to be an empty cup. Amrita Pritam observes:

“...But what matters is not life but the courage you bring to it”⁶

Rajbibi began teaching in a school at Gujranwala along with her sister-in-law with whose brother she had been married. Prior to her school hours Rajbibi regularly visited Dayalji's Ashram with her sister in law. Once, it rained very heavily, none was able to leave that Ashram. At that juncture St. Dayalji instructed Bal Sadhu to recite few poems. While reciting the poems Bal Sadhu closed his eyes. As soon as he opened his eyes, they were directly fixed upon Rajbibi. Having noticed this, Dayalji soon advised Nand Sadhu to return to the family life. Nand Sadhu married Rajbibi and turned out to be an ideal 'Grihastha' (home maker).

As a married gentleman Nand Sadhu changed his name to Kartar Singh. Thus, Amrita is a daughter of the revolutionary parents. . Just like her parents Amrita pursued her inner voice and lived life on her own terms.

Thus, Pritam's autobiography is an account of her life built up with her memory. She has collected the scattered material of her life and conveyed a very novel vision of life.

The great critic George Gusdorf compares the autobiographer to a historian, who narrates his/her own history. He is the hero of his own tale and wants to unfold his past in order to draw out the structure of his being in time".⁷

Recollection of past is dependent upon creative memory. Memory is very elastic phenomenon and utilizing it at her best Pritam regenerates her material and reshapes it. The whole process of her recollection is very artistic. Again, recollecting her past through her powerful memory, Pritam remarks: "The most remarkable thing about father was that a life of riches or renunciation came alike to him..."⁸

Her father gifted his own home to a friend and for the rest of his life lived in rented places. Pritam with a great pride confesses that half a century later both riches and renunciation had taken birth in her as well. Her own disposition resembled with that of her father's. She could see with the same eyes as her father did. That is to say, just like her father she considered the life of riches and renunciation alike.

Moreover, recollecting her past Pritam relates how her faith in God was shattered after her mother's death. As advised by her father Amrita turned to poetry after her mother's death. Her father detached himself from all the subservience of life but did not renounce the world only for Amrita's sake. Amrita complains God for not listening to her plea to save her mother. At the tender age of ten, she lost her mother.

Like a skilled dramatist Amrita presents several indirect suggestions of her future. She relates to the treatment of her grandmother towards Muslims. She explains how her grandmother used to keep three tumblers on a separate shelf and offered tea or lassi to her father's Muslim friends in those tumblers only. Once she stubbornly demanded tea in one of those tumblers only. She succeeded in revolt and joyously comments that, afterwards no utensil was labelled 'Hindu' or 'Muslim' in their household. Here one can read the most secular personality coming to the forefront. Further, she comments that neither she nor her grandma knew then that the man she was to fall in love with would be of the same faith as the branded utensils were meant for.

Further, recollecting her sixteenth year, Amrita sounds more of a poet rather than a mere prose writer. Very artistically she depicts her sweet sixteenth:

"Like a thief came my sixteenth year, stealthily like a prowler in the night, stealing in through the open window of the head of my bed..."⁹

Pritam accepts that she had a clandestine relationship with her sixteenth year. Just like Amrita her sixteenth year too was scared of her father. Her father wanted a Amrita to be an obedient, submissive daughter but her sixteenth year questioned the parental authority, all the 'do's' and 'don'ts' and the entire stratified social scheme.

She observes that her house was full of books but most of them were on religion and about meditation. In her sixteenth year she was much impressed by the books which narrated 'apsaras' like Menaka or Urvashi out to seduce meditating 'Rishis'. Very remarkably Pritam depicts that just like Menaka or Urvashi; her sixteenth year invaded the purity of her childhood. She accepts that the sixteenth year had such an impact upon her that its memory creeps into every phase of her life. Each thought of hers intrude upon those innocent years. Pritam confesses that

even while writing the autobiography in her middle age she has not lost her spirit of sixteenth year. Whether at fifteen or fifty, her feelings have the same intensity. She has the same thirst for life. Whenever a wrong is done a deep sense of outrage arises in her - age is no bar.

Thus, except her mother's death and its bitter memories, Amrita had a very smooth, protected childhood. She questioned the parental authority but accepted the restrictions laid down by her father.

Self centeredness is one of the most important characteristics of an autobiography. Nevertheless, an autobiographer should maintain a kind of balance in giving account of other events and his self. Sometimes the writer's self completely dissolved in narrating other events, characters and place. This happens especially, when an autobiographer is public figure or a leader. Pritam's autobiography maintains cent-percent balance between the contemporary events and personal feelings. She has presented a vivid portrayal of the partition experience of 1947 not only in her novels but also in her life-story. Nevertheless, she has never dissolved her self portrayal in narrating other events. Her life-story centres round a fragile, sensitive human being who is not only a writer but a very tender hearted woman and a mother.

She celebrates femininity. Amrita very poignantly narrates her role as a writer as well as a woman. Generally, she considers Pritam – the woman, secondary to Pritam- the writer. Nevertheless, there are three incidents in her life when Pritam- the woman supersedes Pritam- the writer.

She confesses that Pritam- the writer has helped her discover Pritam – the woman.

The first incident is related to her dreaming of a child with a fair face with finely chiselled features when she had none. Sometimes while watering plants in her garden, she found this child springing up instead of

a flower from the plant. Here she remarks that, if she could not become a mother, could find no meaning at all in life. Further, a woman in her comes to the forefront when she healed Sahir by rubbing Vicks on his throat and chest in his illness. The mere contact had rendered her into a complete woman. Thirdly, a woman in her is aroused when Imroz dipped his brush into the red paint and dubbed a mark on her forehead. Thus, Amrita Pritam has rediscovered a real woman in her. Her treatment is realistic as well as literary. Through her artistic touch she has revealed herself as a writer as well as a woman. Thus, Pritam's autobiography is a well – documented account of the self.

In his novel *Waiting for the Barbarians*, African novelist J.M. Coetzee remarks: "Pain is truth".¹⁰ This remark is much applicable to Amrita Pritam. She has breathed pain but easily accepted it as a way of life. For her, pain is truth and truth is her need as a writer. Generally, an autobiography is considered as the gospel of truth. *The Revenue Stamp* is an intense experience of this search of the truth. The most touching aspect of Pritam's character is the way she embraced truth. She gave a new meaning to the expression "my life is an open book". Whatever she experienced she recorded in her poems and novels her legendary love for Sahir Ludhianvi, the famous Urdu poet. Thus, many of her anecdotes revolve around her love for this man. In her life-story Amrita Pritam observes:

"I never told an untruth to father; I can never lie to myself either".¹¹
(pg-4)

Thus, Pritam is truthful to herself. To reveal one's life story with a transparency is very difficult task. Pritam has exposed her inner feelings with a great precision. She is very confessional and candid in her tone. Once, her son came to her and said, "People say that I am Sahir Uncle's son". Amrita replied; "I wish you were Sahir Uncle's son".¹²

One can imagine the inner courage and conviction of a woman who could reply this.

For an autobiographer the factual truth subordinated to the truth about himself. He offers us a dialogue with himself. Autobiography is the affirmation of the man who seeks the innermost fidelity. The autobiographer gives a completely new perspective to his life. Amrita's relationship with Sahir and Imroz are presented with fidelity to the facts but she has given an extraordinary colour to these relationships. Thus, the autobiographical truth supersedes the factual truth. Amrita fell in love with the poetry of Sahir Ludhianvi and nurtured an infatuation for many years. She wrote his name hundreds of times on a sheet of paper while addressing a press conference. They would meet without exchanging a word and Sahir would puff away. After Sahir's departure, Amrita would smoke the cigarette butts left behind by him. After his death, Amrita said she hoped the air mixed with the smoke of the butts would travel to the other world and meet Sahir! Such was Amrita's obsession and intensity. Their intensity of love has been expressed thus:

“Aur mujhe lagta hai
Ki shamshan ki aag, aag ka apman hai
Kisi sohni, sassi ya Heer mein
Jo aag jalti thi
Mujhe us aag ki pehchaan hai”¹³

(I feel that the fire of the cremation ghat is an insult to the flame. I recognize the 'flame' that burnt in the hearts of any Sohni, Sassi or Heer). Thus, Pritam's autobiography is primarily valuable for its artistic excellence. Literary value of an autobiography is of far more significance than its historical or objective function.

Conflict is the predominant component of any literary genre. Without conflict literature can not be created. There is a vast difference

between conflict expressed in fictitious literature and the conflict expressed in life story. In other forms of literature conflict arises in the imaginative world of action. In autobiography the author himself is the centre of the conflict. The conflict is intense when the writer is a woman and that too a revolutionary one like Amrita Pritam. Nevertheless Amrita has treated the conflict in the most individual way. She has no regrets. She confronted conflict in dual way. Hers was a search for true love. In this search, she faced internal conflict as well as external conflict. Being locked in a loveless marriage to a businessman at the age of sixteen, Pritam fell in love with the poet Sahir Ludhianvi. Leafing through her life story we do not feel that she has complaints for her husband Mr. Pritam Singhji, whose name is attached to her till her death. In 1960 she took divorce and started living on her own terms. She nurtured a silent intimate relationship with Saheer for many years.

When she saw Saheer's photograph with his new girl friend on Blitz magazine; she was flabbergasted. She turned on the brink of madness. Her inner self was so much in conflict with herself that she was determined to commit a suicide. She had a nervous breakdown. The only thing that saved her was her poems. She confesses that her saddest verses belong to the year 1960, when she had to part herself from sweet memories of Saheer. Her saddest thoughts are expressed in the sweetest way thus:

“When you can not fill the goblet of night with the nectar of life:

When you can not taste the honey life offers you,

You can not call it tragedy...

Tragedy is, when you write your life's letter to your love and you yourself go and lose his address...”¹⁴

Towards the end of the year 1960 Amrita had to go through a psychiatric treatment. She became a patient of hallucinations and day

dreams. Still in the condition of mental wreck, Amrita went to Nepal, where she was honoured for the same pen with which she had written love songs for Imroz. At this juncture, she wrote to Imroz;

“Way farer! Why did you the first time meet me at an evening hour!

I am approaching the turning point of my life.

If you had to meet me at all why did you not meet me at high noon when you would have felt its heat”¹⁵

Due to her pious search of love Amrita had to confront conflict with the society. She had had many more detractors than her admirers. However, her dashing figure never yielded to anyone. She is annoyed when some one crosses the limits of decency and waits for the right opportunity to reply. When she was working for Delhi Radio station, Sajjad Zaheer declared that few delegates were supposed to visit Russia but their wives disapproved of Amrita’s company. Amrita swallowed the mockery and replied:

‘You have taken all the trouble to come, but how did you assume I’d be wanting to go? I have made up my mind.

If at all I am to venture out to any part of the world one day, I shall go alone. Should the Russians want me to visit their country, they will send me an invitation. If they don’t, so what?”¹⁶

And to make her words true, in next few years she was invited to Moscow, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, West Germany and most of the parts of the world. Thus, Pritam’s will power lifted her above all storms of life. She had a spirit to fight and finish. Pritam remarks that she had the utmost respect for her contemporaries but her sad experience with them left her wondering why her respect for the word and the pen did not vanish long ago.

It was with artist Imroz that Amrita chose to make a home in Delhi. It was a relationship of rare understanding and the companionship lasted

over four decades. Amrita's relationship with Imroz was fascinating. A man, so much younger than her with whom she lived in the heart of middle class Delhi and her children lived in the same apartment complex but a floor below hers:

:Yeh mein hoon yeh tu hai, aur beech mein hai sapana".¹⁷

(This is me and that's you and in the chasm is the dream)

Autobiography is a reconstruction of the past. The autobiographer has to face a complex situation in revisiting the past. The autobiographer becomes almost a stranger to himself when he thinks of his life in retrospect and arranges the past events in the light of the present. He not only describes what has happened to him in the past but also records what he is out of what he had earlier been. The writer has to overcome the time gap between the life lived in the past and its depiction in the present. Prof. Meena Sodhi remarks that the recollection or recapitulation is dependent upon creative memory, "that apes and reshapes the historic past as in the image of the present, making the past as necessary to this present as this present is the inevitable outcome of the past".¹⁸

Amrita Pritam possesses this creative memory through which she has maintained a perfect balance between her past and the present. Her autobiography was published in the year 1976. That is to say, when she was 57 year old. Nevertheless her account of the childhood and her youth appears as fresh as flower. Her search for the truth and true love never ends. Her complete being in the present appears an inevitable outcome of the past. Every narration is quite poetic. Her accounts of the partition experiences and her visits to various places of the world like Bulgaria, Russia and others are quite fresh and racy. She appears a curious traveller through out her life. As a traveller, she travelled with time but never forgot the path she had trodden. Hence, we find a compact

interrelation between her past and the present. She has rightly given a true picture of her life as a grand tour in following words:

“From the Ganges to Vodka is this a travelogue of my thirst”.¹⁹

The autobiographer who recounts his life's history is on a search for his self in the annals of history. It is not a 'disinterested endeavour' but a case of personal explanation. Gerhard Stilz thinks that in order to bridge the gap “between past and present, autobiographer borrows the models and devices of historiography which help him to show how the present, complicated state of affairs can be convincingly derived and explained by relating it to identifiable and well arranged steps performed successfully in the past”²⁰

Amrita Pritam possesses the extraordinary talent of relating her present with her past. She marvellously uses the technique of flashbacks and flash forwards and thus presents historical consistency in her narration. For instance, she associates the partition experience of 1947 with the separation from her husband. Amrita declares that like a comb in tousled hair, her thoughts too would often get tangled. She advocates complete individuality of thinking. She advocates that one day she will have to give accounts of what attempts she had made for inner freedom. She felt that every woman has looked sixteen graces in some mutiny against society. She was determined to unfurl all the bondages. She felt that she could not work out a living together with her husband. There was a vast distance between the ways their minds ticked. Hence, after long discussions in a friendly fashion they decided to change their respective courses of life. Further she adds that she had such a feeling long before partition:

“Fellow traveller, we are parting company today”.²¹

This distance between us will grow...

Amrita Pritam has never repeated the scenes but always given new perspectives on the same scenes of life. She has given a well trimmed graph of her life, which is compact and comprehensive.

An autobiography can be viewed as a history, philosophy and psychology. As a work of art it is not only a focus on the author's life, but an artistic creation which employs all narrative devices and restrictions like accuracy, impartiality and inclusiveness. Though Pritam is writing about herself, she is not far away from her contemporary era. She has marvellously mingled political, social, religious and literary conditions of her times and given a full length portrait of twentieth century. She has given a poetic fervour to the history of her times. She has presented a date wise record of her times but she never appears a mere chronicler. She has reclothed her characters and reshaped her past in a very artistic manner. Nevertheless, she has never forgotten her role as a writer amidst the changing conditions of her times. Like a true painter, Amrita has painted the portrait of her era thus:

September 9-22, 1967:

“I meet Vihar Bela, the Hungarian poet who remarks ‘The moment an invader set his foot on the soil of a country; the books are the first to start shrinking...But when a poet sets his foot on the same soil, the same books are again the first to swell out...’”²²

Under the same title of September 9-22, Amrita narrates her meeting with various poets like Yobaj Karoj, Gabor Garai and others. Here, Amrita also relates to her visit to the south of Budapest, where Ravindranath Tagore had planted a sapling and had written: ‘May this add to each new season of yours even when I have passed away from this earth’.²³

Amrita also remarks that Tagore's statue stand nearby. Further, Pritam has narrated her second visit to the Poetry Festival at Struga in

1972, where the organizers had given her a warm welcome and special evening session had been organized for the recital of Amrita's poems.

November, 10-16, 1972:

Here, Amrita has depicted her visit to Italy in the most remarkable terms:

"In a way, each country is a poem in itself some of the poem's lines are set in glittering gold; others steeped in bloodshed by foreign guns and some remain evergreen.... Yet there can be a country like an incomplete poem. Italy gives me the feeling of being both a complete and an incomplete poem..."²⁴

Thus, in the course of the 1967 cultural exchange Programme' Amrita Pritam was nominated poet by the Government of India for her visits to Yugoslavia, Hungary and Rumania. In *The Revenue Stamp* we find some passages of her diary directly included right from May, 24, 1967 to November 1972. However, this record is not at all monotonous but markedly poetic.

The Revenue Stamp has been narrated with a remarkable contemporaneousness. Throughout the book we find a shadow of the partition experience of 1947. Further, Amrita's visits to various places like Taskand, Moscow, Teheran and other places prove her as a poet of international renown. Amrita observes that, in 1947, when all social, political and religious values were crashing down like pieces of glass under the feet of people in flight... those same pieces of glasses bruised her soul and her limbs bled. She wrote for the suffering of those who were abducted and raped. Recollecting the terror of the partition period, Amrita observes that the most gruesome accounts of marauding invaders in all mythologies and chronicles put together can not be compared with the blood curdling horrors of that historic year. It would cover up a whole life time to retell the hair raising events of those years. Amrita compares

the year 1947, with the pitch black darkness of the night. Uprooted from Lahore, Amrita rehabilitated for awhile at Dehradun but later went to Delhi for work and a place to live in. On her return journey, she could not sleep in the train. Winds echoed the sounds of terror. The trees loomed larger like sentinels of sorrow. Stark aridity surrounded her and Amrita wrote her immortal poem addressed to 'Waris Shah' with her trembling fingers:

"From the depths of your grave, Waris Shah,
Add a new page to your Saga of love
Once when daughter of Punjab wept
Your pen unleashed a million cries,
A million daughters weep today, their eyes turned to you, Waris Shah".²⁵

This poem, transcending geographical and communal boundaries, captured the pain of the partition. After this poem Amrita became dear to the heart of the Punjabis on both sides of the border. Over the years, her fame spread worldwide.

Returning to the history of her times Pritam recollects the mutiny of 1857 and associates its terrors with those of 1947 partition. With an artistic precision, she fills up the gap of one century. She observes that her Grand – Father in law had inherited a carpet from his forefathers and preferred to sleep on that relic when the family lived in Lahore. It was looted by a Sardar from a melee in Delhi right back in 1857. The migration from Lahore to Delhi turned out to be so much shocking for the grand father that he died within a few days on the same carpet in Delhi. After his death the carpet was given away to a Fakir. The family members thought:

"What belongs to Delhi has been returned to it after a century".²⁶

In Amrita's view, loot too is a sort of debt that one has to repay.

Amrita's life is an account of honest, intimate human relationships. She had always maintained her relationship with pious, transparent heart. Her love for mankind was selfless. During her life time she had maintained pure friendship with persons like Sajjad Haider. In the conservative Indian scenario of twentieth century people doubted whether there can be a friendship between man and woman. Surpassing all the social, religious taboos Amrita continued her friendly gestures with Sajjad Haider. He was perhaps the first real friend she had. They often met in Lahore. Amrita had a sense of great reverence for him Sajjad used to visit Amrita even at the times of riots whenever the curfew was lifted. The whole family of Amrita was surprised when Sajjad came with a birthday cake on Amrita's little daughter's birthday.

Meanwhile, Amrita moved from Lahore to Dehradun. Nonetheless Sajjad wrote her letters regularly. They saw each other's sons through the photographs.

One day when Amrita's son was contacted with fever, Sajjad prayed for him and wrote to Amrita in a return letter:

"I have been praying all night for your son. There is an Arabic saying: When the enemy prays, the prayer is bound to be granted'. In the eyes of the people I am an enemy of your country at this hour... God forbid that I ever become one of yours or your child's..."²⁷

Such was the understanding and intimacy of Sajjad and Amrita. Then after Amrita and Sajjad did not meet for many years. After wards, Sajjad also translated one of Amrita's poems entitled 'Neighbouring Beauty' and got it published in 'Pakistan Times'. Having read Amrita's poem seven years' written for Saheer, Sajjad wrote to her that he wanted to talk with Amrita about the person for whom she had written 'Seven years'. Further, when Sajjad was in Delhi for eighteen days Amrita and Sajjad often met; when Amrita realized that a poem can not only be

written out of the passion of love, it can be created for the passion of friendship also. Parting from Sajjad she wrote:

“Buy me a pair of wings, stranger or come and live with me”²⁸

Thus, Amrita – a woman of manumitted shared her deep rooted love with her fellow travellers and led an open hearted relationship with each fellow being that came enroute.

In March 1971 Amrita Pritam remarks that, a tenderly nursed friendship passed away. It died suddenly like the failure of a heart. Sajjad’s death caused an earth shattering effect on Amrita and again she pays tribute to her near and dear friend:

“there was to be an end to the friendship, so it ended...

Good by my friend!”

Speak of it in amity or disdain whatever we feel....

It makes not the slightest difference now if you enshroud it I splendid brocade or wretched rags.

Will I have to hear the entire story?

No it’s not Doomsday,

So it can not be resurrected...”²⁹

Another literary figure who was much influenced by Amrita’s towering personality before partition was the most revered poet of the time Mohan Singhji. Amrita recalls, engaged at the age of four, she had been married off at the age of sixteen in the usual manner. She had not been involved in any noteworthy incident. Nevertheless, in literary circles romantic fire works keep cracking. Amrita had a heart felt respect for Mohan Singhji. But Mohansinghji adored her a lot. Once when Mohan Singhji visited Amrita along with his friend Kapursinghji and Kapursinghji commented that Amrita was misunderstood by Mohansinghji, Amrita replied:

“Mohansinghji... You have all my respect I am a friend of yours... What more do you want?”³⁰

Once, Pandit Satyadev Sharma, the staff artist at the Lahore Radio Station, wrote a story in Hindi entitled *Twenty six Men and a Girl*. This story very interestingly referred to the number of gentlemen who were interested in and spell bound by Amrita’s personality. There are many more poets and poetess who belong among Amrita’s fans. Amongst these friends Zulfia Khanum ranks first. She pulled Amrita out of the quagmire of her mental condition after her break up with Saheer.

Amrita remarks that, with tears in her eyes, Zulfia could establish a relationship with women all over the world. Zulfia remarked that in Uzbek a girl is called ‘Khan’ but she becomes ‘Khanum’ when she grows up. Hence, she used to call Amrita – ‘Amrita Khanum’. Translating the word ‘Amrita’ in Uzbek become ‘Ulmus’ khanum! Amrita accepted joyfully the new rhyme of her name and said:

“When pen embraces page, earlier silence are forgotten

Love reveals its secrets;

In Uzbek or in Punjabi, the rhyme is the same”³¹

Further Amrita has noted her remarkable assets – the list of the gifts gifted to her by her dear ones and friends. Amongst these assets also belong the letters written to her by Imroz and her children.

Every dark cloud has a silver lining. Amrita not only had roses but also thorns in her life.

Many poets and critics of her times poked acidic criticism at her. Amrita compares her life long battle with her contemporaries as the battle of Dharma – Mahabharata. She had to fight against the people belonging to her own community – the poets.

Amrita remarks that her reverence for poets like Sant Sangh Sekhon and Mohan Singhji turned out to be proper. On the other hand,

her poets like Navjot Singh and Kartar Singh Duggal did not deserve the praise she merited them in her articles 'Mera Humdum Mera Dost' and 'Thanda Dastana', faith and hope shattered in both the literatures. Literary figures like Sadhu Singh and Hamdard indulged other contemporaries in their mudslinging against Amrita. They were also malicious. Amrita's faith in the great literary figure Gurbachan sing Bhullar also shattered when she read the story connected about Harbhajan Singh and herself by him in *Preetlari*. Amrita was really shocked by the irresponsibility of the communist press. The daily 'Lok Lehar' of this press charged that Amrita's monthly magazine *Nagmani* was vulgar, sex oriented and pornography. Nevertheless not a single soul supported Amrita and protested against 'Lok Lehar'. Amrita's heart became heavy with such an attack and she wrote:

"You, who leap at Shadows must know,
Hearts, in flames, do not bear shadows"³²

Writing is a mission for Amrita Pritam; she is least concerned whether she is cent percent approved by the society. She feels that even if none has benefited from her stories it does not make her stories less worthy. She observes; "In my eyes, my own face becomes real and alive only when I am in the act of writing a poem".³³ The warmth of the language always penetrated her very being.

Amrita Pritam remarks that bits and pieces of a writer's life always creep into hi/her literary works. In one of the chapters of her autobiography entitled *In Silence Passion Smote*, Pritam has elaborately expressed the sources and inspirations behind her famous novels and poems.

Amrita confesses that the central heroine 'Sunderam' of her novella *Yatri* published in 1968 was a replica of her self. While reading

the first draft of novella in the presence of Imroz a lump came into her throat on the mere mention of the heroine's name.

Further, a character called Jagdeep in her work *Ik Savaal* stood beside his mother's bed exactly the way in which Amrita stood beside hers. Just like Jagdeep, Amrita too prayed to God to save her mother. Jagdeep too lost his trust in God just like Amrita when God did not pay her heed and her mother died.

Amrita Pritam relates one more incident from her life which has direct association with the story of 'Ik Savaal'. When she returned from the convocation ceremony at the University, Davinder shoved something into the pocket of his shirt and called her:

"Didi!" Then he stuttered, " I must be...er...permitted...I feel like performing a ceremony too. May I? You won't get angry? Say you won't".³⁴

Then he pulled out the silk handkerchief in which he had packed some cardamoms, candy and the traditional sum of Rs. 21. Then, he told Amrita that if her father had been alive or if she had a brother, they might have greeted Amrita in the same manner.

When Amrita had written this incident in *Ik Savaal*, there was no idea about Davinder in her mind. But, the same incident happened in her life and came out directly from the pages of her book. Further connecting the story, Amrita observes that after the death of his father the hero Jagdeep gives away his step mother to the young man of her choice. Later, the step mother invited him to dine at her place and suggested that the mother and son should eat from the same plate. At this juncture, the hero wanted to know "Tell me first... are you mother, sister or daughter to me?"³⁵

Amrita remarks that after fourteen years when Davinder offered her the silk handkerchief, the words came to her lips again: "Tell me first.... Are you father, brother or son to me?"³⁶

Further, Amrita accepts that several characters like Rajashree are not associated with the real life but after their depiction in the story they get associated with life in one way or another. Love-lorn Rajashree often thought of ending her life in the same way in which Amrita and her father's sister Hakko did. Amrita's life – story is full of shadows and dreams which inspired her to depict immemorial characters.

Do Auratan is another such story which Amrita had witnessed when she lived in Lahore. It is the story of two women - a kept and a wife. Tamancha Jan the nightingale of Lahore was invited to grace the wedding ceremony of the Shah's son. She performed well and looked gracious. After Tamancha Jan had sung, the bridegroom's mother took out a hundred rupees note pay Tamancha Jan. Having felt insulted, she restrained herself and said: "Keep it after all, it is not the first time I've eaten from the Shah's house". Shahani replied, "From, the Shah, yes... but when will you ever take anything again from my hands?"³⁷

In this way, the story of *Do Auratan* deals with the deeper meaning behind the social values of the time. Although Tamancha was a young, fragile and attractive and the Shahani, an ageing and bulky women whose pride in being a wife and mother could not be weighed down by the beauty and charm of Tamancha Jan.

Further, Amrita relates that the film *Kadambari* was based on her story of *Dharti Sagar te Sippiyan*. The character of Chetna in the film is based on Amrita's own revolutionary spirit where in the heroine waved all social acceptances aside and is totally involved with her love. In 1975, when Amrita was invited to write lyric for the film, she recalled the poem

she had written for Imroz in 1960. She turned the Punjabi into Hindi version and animated 'Chetna' of fifteen years earlier:

"Today we took the cloud – lip from the bowl of the sky
And supped – sip of moonlight."³⁸

Further, Pritam observes that the central heroine Nina in *Aalna* was conceived in her imagination. In this novella Amrita has depicted the story of three generations. Later on without disclosing her identity one of the readers of the novella wrote a series of letters to Amrita confessing that she was the Nina of Amrita's book. Amrita had no way of communicating with her and never found out what happened to her thereafter.

Similarly, when 'Ik si Anita' was published in Urdu, a prostitute from Hyderabad wrote to Amrita that the story of Anita was hers. She also offered to meet Amrita in person at Delhi, but afterwards withdrew the plan. Further, Pritam comments that the heroine of 'Arial' came and lived with her for a full month and a half. Amrita read the first draft of the novella in her presence and she often wept with satisfaction. Amrita observes that such a satisfaction was of greater value to her than the fact of publication. She believes that a work of art is near intended to be the cause of pain to anybody. It is primarily meant for study.

The story of *Bulava* was based on Faiz, the distinguished painter from Bombay. Another famous work of Amrita, *Jeb-katre* was based on the relatively immature years of her son's life. In this novella, Pritam has penned down the usual joys and sorrows of growth, their dreams, and their views about life. Having completed *Jeb-Katre* she gave it to her son to read. Most of his friends read it soon than him and recognized themselves and appreciated Amrita's achievement. When it came to heron's turn, he was not entirely satisfied. He said: "Had I written it, it would have been altogether different".³⁹ Amrita accepts that it was to be

so. Her attempt was just to bridge the gap between the two generations. Her point of view is bound to be different from that of her son's. She definitely belonged to the earlier generation.

Whenever Amrita's son Nawroj came home for the vacation, he used to be full of all sorts of Hostel News. Amrita used to make notes of such news and included in her stories when needed. One day, he startled her with his agonizing question: "It was all very well of you, Mamma, to give a new turn to your life... but did you ever stop to think what mental suffering we two children of yours went through?"⁴⁰

Amrita was really stunned. She accepts that, when a house crumbles it causes much pain to kids and they have to confront twin – loyalties.

On her son's insistence Amrita attempted to depict the suffering of a child from a broken home in *Midnight Fears*. This work cent percent depicts Nawroj's state of mind.

Amrita confesses that her kids and near ones has never caused her any pain in life. She has always managed with her temperament, while replying them anything. But only those have given her pain, who have had nothing to do with her in life. She had to suffer by the adverse criticism of other writers and rivals of her time.

Thud, Amrita Pritam's literary works are the outcome of the conscious and subconscious merging into one another. She observes that her real wealth consists in the characters. She has created and she is bound to them with a deep feeling of love. Many a times she becomes so much involved with her characters that their sufferings became her own. It is quite clear that Amrita could not have found life worth living without writing. Her love for creation and creative writing is focused when she remarks:

”There have been so many days when I have held my pen close to my breast and wept and wept....”⁴¹

Further, Amrita comments that she had to go through many struggles and difficulties in life. After partition, she got a job with All India Radio. She had to stick to it for a full twelve years...For the first few years she had a daily contract of Rs. 5! Even if she had a cold or fever she could not miss a day. One of her colleagues Mr. Kumar helped her a lot and gave her the shorter announcements by taking the longer ones himself.

Amrita comments that, whatsoever life offered her, the one thing that did not let her down during the most depressing times was her pen. She observes:

“Whether I wrote my own thoughts down or wrote about partition, my pen was as much a part of me as the limbs of my body...”⁴²

Thus, Amrita – heart – core writer lived with the magic of imaginative invention. She flew into the open, free sky with the wings of imagination. Apart from above mentioned works Amrita also wrote ‘Sunehere’ (a collection of poems for which she was awarded the Akademi award in 1957). In memory of Saheer. When she came to know the news about Akademi award, she thought that she hadn’t written ‘Sunehere’ for an award! The book is not worth the award until it is read by Saheer. When the reporter and the photographer from the press came and insisted that Amrita should pose as one engrossed in writing, she filled up; a whole sheet of ‘Saheer’! She herself remarks that it was like living through the classical romance of Majnu calling out “Laila, Laila, Laila...”

She was relieved when next morning she found that her pretty follies were not printed in the news papers.

Further Amrita notes that her novels namely *Ashu*, *Ik si Anita* and *Dili Diyan Gallian* are also remarkably inspired by Saheer.

Many of Amrita's novels and poems are inspired by partition experiences as she was eye witness to the partition experiences of 1947. Among the works about partition experiences her novel 'Pinjar' is noteworthy. This novel portrays the agony of communal riots, abduction, trauma and symbolic reunion of victims and victimizers in the prophetic hope of communal amity. Here Woman's agony is a connecting theme. The novel was recently made into a Hindi film by director Chandra Prakash . In the novel Amrita also talks about the thousands of women who suffer in times of war who are raped, tortured, killed abducted or left to die.

Amrita is stronger as poet so far as the depiction of partition experience is concerned. 'Waris Shah nu' is the most memorable poems of hers.

Here are some lines from *The Scar*:

"I am also of human kind
I am the sign of that injury
The symbol of that accident,
Which, in the clash of changing times,
Inevitably hit my mother's forehead
.....
Who can guess
How difficult it is
To nurse barbarity in one's belly
To consume the body and burn the bones?
I am the fruit of that season
When the berries of Independence came into blossom"

⁴³

Jalte Bujhte log (None lives abroad!) is another noteworthy work of Pritam. It has been considered as Amrita's Swan Song containing three novelettes written earlier: *Jalawatan*, *Jeb Katre*, and *Kachi Sadak*. Here Amrita Pritam has shown the feeling of an alien living in a distant land.

We do find the feminist turn in Pritam's works. After her divorce in 1960, Amrita's work turned explicitly feminist. Amrita was overwhelmed by the suppression of women, because of their economic dependence on the male members of the family. The women had become just an artefact, an object through her deeply felt handling of delicate subjects of women; she captured the hearts of her readers and placed Punjabi literature on national scene. She was not only fluent in her mother tongue but also equally at ease in Hindi. Pritam has gifted Punjabi literature with some powerful women characters like Sundaran in *Yatri*, Pooro in *Pinjar*, Chetna in *Dharti Sagar te Sippiyan* and many more.

Amrita's heroines like their creator are always in search of truth. When Pritam found out that she could no longer pull on with her husband, she decided to face the truth of their separation. She confessed in his presence that they should go their own ways and should not be worried about the wagging tongues of the society. Amrita always felt that she had stolen shelter under her husband's roof. The voice from the depth of her heart could no longer go unheeded. Hence, she reflected: "I have nonetheless a sense of pride in this bowed head of mine I have not had to pay the price of security. I have not allowed the prestige of family life to suffer, nor have I fallen for any of the usually accepted social sanctions. I have always had, in the course of my journey over each milestone in life's mutiny, the realisation of having been able to pay back the debts I owed."⁴⁴

Thus, Amrita Pritam sounds very individual and independent in thinking. She was honest to herself and heard the inner voice of her heart.

She not only thought of her freedom but also regarded the freedom of others as her own. She also separated herself from Imroz for three years prior to taking any decision of living together.

Once, the great critic Revti Saran Sharma asked Amrita a notable question: “Amrita! If the heroines of your novels in search of truth leave their homes, don’t you think the effect of it can be shattering in the social context, I mean?”

Amrita replied: “If false social values have until now accounted for broken homes, let a few more be broken but, mark you from now on, at the altar of truth!”⁴⁵

Thus, Amrita’s life is a long and painful search for the truth. The same is true in the case of her heroines. There is no space for hypocrisy and snobbery in her life and in the lives of her characters. She firmly believed that truth brings harmony between the body and the mind.

In spite of her individual and independent thinking Amrita was never bereft of tender motherly feelings. She believed in the principle of sharing and not dominance. She always enjoyed her femininity and its various role patterns like daughter, mother and wife. She illustrates her maternal feeling of the year 1969. She notes that, suddenly a trunk call of her son from Baroda University came. In reply to all the letters she had written, after a long time – span her son said on the phone: “I’m fine Mamma – in perfect health.”⁴⁶ Amrita very lucidly depicts her deeper feelings at this juncture. Listening to the ring, Amrita felt warm enough. She remarks: “My flesh melted into my very spirit and fed the pure naked soul to a flame..... As lightning in the dark, a thought flashed across my mind if I, an ordinary woman, could get a mighty thrill from the sound of my son’s voice, what must Mata Tripta have felt during the time she was carrying Nanak?”⁴⁷

Thus, Amrita enjoyed her femininity from the very root. The writer in her always rejuvenated the woman in her.

Amrita's life long search for true love ends with Imroz a real confidante and a true friend. Her affection for him is beyond time and space. Imroz followed her like a shadow. Amrita Pritam remarks "What is it that nourishes the appetite one has for certain things of life? The friendships with Sahir and Sajjad blossom at the same time as my relationship with Imroz... and they turn life into a veritable oasis".⁴⁸

Amrita's thirst for truth and love was quenched by Imroz. Imroz always shielded Amrita from the adverse criticism of her times and never allowed any untruths to surround her. Imroz had a great faith in the spirit of freedom. He believed in the freedom of mind, heart and soul. He opined: "Why should the law interfere when you choose a path for yourself alone. To subject such choice to restraint of any kind is an insult both to the feet and to the path".⁴⁹

Once a palmist said to Amrita that, she would never be in want of money as the lines of wealth on her palm was deep and unbroken. He prophesied the reverse in Imroz's case. Imroz clasped Amrita's hand and declared that they would hang on single line and that one of Amrita's. In the earlier years Imroz served in an advertising firm with a pay scale of Rs. 1200 or so. He had also to work at night which brought him another Rs. 500 per month. Imroz always dreamt of having extra 10,000 rupees with him to chunk his monotonous job and all of his time for his passion – painting. Amrita strived hard to make Imroz's dream come true.

Once, in Amrita's absence Imroz experimented with the batik – print occupation. As a matter of fact he was an artist and not a businessman. Hence he failed. With a very mild yet fun rollicking sense of humour Amrita relates the whole incident of Imroz's failure in the business. She narrates that Imroz's tailor went snip – snap with 500

pieces of batik shirts in such a way that once a person wears it he/she can not do away with it. Once, when an American woman came to buy those pieces and went for a trial, she literally screamed for help: “P-l-e-a-s-e get me out of this!” Amrita forgot saving Rs. 10,000 for Imroz. To make the matter worse, Imroz had to sell the only piece of land he possessed for Rs. 6,500 to repay the debt of Rs. 20,000 invested in batik experiment.

Imroz as Amrita introduces had a creative mind. He expressed his ideas through paper, canvas, wood and so forth. He did beautiful designs on paper but to transfer the paper work on to cloth was not within his reach. Amrita ‘tongue in cheek’ expresses that those who owned mills did not understand the beauty of his designs. Thus, artists are meant to be starved.

In the same way, Imroz worked on designs of calendars but did not gain much. Further, Pritam remarks that in her relationship with Imroz, there were not roses, roses all the way. Their relationship was oscillating between merging and clashing. It merged like the water of streams and clashed like rival peaks. Nevertheless, after fourteen years of togetherness she observes that she was not regretful about the path she had chosen.

Imroz’s personality was like the flow of a river. He could only maintain relationship if only there was nothing to bind it. Reality of life is quite different.

Pritam recollects one of the most memorable incident of her interaction with Imroz. Once, when she was ill, she pleaded Imroz that after her death he would not live alone in the world but choose another life partner. At this juncture, he replied: “Who by the way, do you take me for? A Parsee... that I must be thrown to the vultures to be pecked at...? You’ve no business to die on my hands like this... When I haven’t yet had one desire of mine fulfilled? I must see the film through. Now

you promise me you're going to jog along until we're both ready to go together....”⁵⁰

Thus, Amrita and Imroz were two different selves with one soul. They were really made for each other. They loved, respected, understood and took care of each other's freedom in a unique way without any social or religious bondage. Hats - hats off to such pious souls!

Further more Amrita has noted how wonderfully Imroz offered his share in each house hold chores. If Amrita scrubbed the dishes, Imroz helped her by heating and pouring the water for the washing and so on.

When Imroz ran out of funds Amrita bought all his pictures and offered him money to purchase new canvas. When the sales of Amrita's books were delayed and she was distressed, Imroz helped her and kept her morale strengthened. Amrita always prayed to get a partner like Imroz in her next birth also.

In the last few chapters of her book *The Revenue Stamp*, Amrita Pritam has narrated her discourses with the first woman Prime minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

Through the letters written by Mrs. Gandhi to Amrita, we come to know about the intimacy between the two tough women of the times. Mrs. Gandhi appreciated Amrita's talent and courage to tell the truth. Amrita had also written a script on Mrs. Gandhi's life for the film by Basu Bhattacharya.

Once, Amritaji asked Indiraji whether the fact of her being a woman had created any difficulties in working with others. Indiraji replied: "...Physically, I would not presume to match a man's strength...but in every other way I am confident I am more capable. That is why perhaps I've never considered the accidental factor of being a woman as a handicap. Those who had taken me merely for a woman had certainly underestimated me”.⁵¹

Thus, both the women had very independent ideas regarding femininity. Nevertheless, Amrita opined that to Indiraji the sense of freedom came very naturally but Amritaji's path was indeed steep and tortuous. Indiraji belonged to the elite class. Being one of the common mass and that too in conservative Gujranwala – Amrita had to strive hard to get the same freedom.

In one of her letters Indiraji commented that *The Revenue Stamp* contained the depiction of Amrita's self and yet it had something universal. She remarked: "Patterns are different but the essence of dreams and of struggles exist in some measure in all humans".⁵²

Thus, both the strong women considered each other's worth in equal measure.

In the last chapter of her life story entitled 'On one palm Henna on the other Blisters', Amritaji has narrated various scraps from her diary depicting some immemorial events of her life. One can't call it last literally but it is so chronologically. In 1980 the book 'The Revenue Stamp; was published in Gujarati and became a course book in S.N.D.T. University of Bombay. In the same year the doctors diagnosed that Amritaji had some heart problem. Here, she comments that at that moment the simple she had fallen in love herself and she wrote two poems – 'A complaint' and 'Processing'. The poem 'A complaint' goes like this:

"Oh deceitful! You my beloved you rule the breath, so how come you are tired?"⁵³

And the poem 'processing goes like this: "...I have come on a pilgrimage to the river of my soul, I offer the sun in obeisance..."⁵⁴

In the same last chapter under the subtitle 'A Blank Sheet' Amrita notes that after twenty days of the diagnosis of her heart problem, she received the news of Sahir's death of heart attack. Amritaji remarks that it

was the mistake of death to identify Saheer as Amrita. In 1980 Amritaji considers her book as the tale of an empty blank paper in which there are no words.

In 1982, she received 'Bhartiya Jnanpith' award for her book of poems *Kagaz Te Canvas*; This was the same year in which her son who was not ready to remarry after his divorce, reversed his decision and married a very gentle natured girl at the end of the year.

In 1983, Jabalpur University honoured Amritaji with a D. Lit. This was the same year in which her grand daughter Shilpi was born. In the same year, one of the poems published in *Kagaz Te Canvas* was considered objectionable, as it hurt the religious sentiments. This poem depicted the nine dreams of Guru Nanak's mother, before the birth of Guru Nanak. These were very tense days for Amrita. During those tense moments, Amritaji had a kind of realization of God. She could hear the divine without any confusion. She was face to face with Nanak in her half-awakened state. She observes: "suddenly in front of my eyes a glow appeared and an electric current passed through me. No face appeared but I heard a distinct voice: "Have you seen the proof you wanted?" And in the half awakened state I said "Yes I have seen it."⁵⁵

In the concluding pages of her life-story Pritam depicts her inner – sorrow at the death of India's legend – Mrs. Indira Gandhi. She seems to have accepted death as a natural course of life. She opines that birth is reality, death is like a sound of water going away from the water. Amritaji herself seems to be led on the path of glory and the divine. Often she narrates her experience of having seen "a circle of light spreading across the whole sky constituted of small particles of light with music emerging from it."⁵⁶

Thus, Amrita went through the mixed feeling of agony and ecstasy. She opines that some of her experiences of the divine can cover up a whole

separate book. Some of her unspoken feelings have been preserved by the AIR Archives in her own words. In the twilight of life she enjoyed playing with her two grand children and writing.

An autobiography can never be a complete whole. It is always an unfinished everlasting account of the search of truth. Pritam herself opines that art consists in recreation. Her inner experiences in which she has created an unbroken bond with the divine, needed a whole separate book. She has written a supplementary to her life story entitled ‘Shadow of Words’. Here, she captured her entire life span with all its warp and woofs on a completely spiritual base. It was her innate belief that experiences of her life have been created and lived under some shadow or another. Death casts its shadows right at the time of the birth, then after fall the shadows of weapons, words, dreams and power. These reflections affected her intense desire to present to her readers an incisive insight into her inner world. *Shadow of Words* can be rightly called a spiritual biography.

Amrita Pritam’s life is an open book of a life lived with all its colours and shades. It is a beacon – light for all her fellow beings. With Amrita, whole era of literature has passed away. She had been a voice of Punjab, voice of India and a voice of millions of daughters of the world. Throughout the Ages human race will remain indebted to her. Physically she is no more but her soul will always remain with us:

“May be I will turn into a spring
And rub the foaming
Drops of water on your body
And rest my coolness on
Your burning chest.
I know nothing else

But that this life
Will walk along with me
When the body perishes
All perishes
But the threads of memory
Are woven with enduring specs.
I will pick these particles
Weave the threads
And I will meet you yet again.”

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