

An Analysis of Novel Writing Styles of Ismat Chughtai

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Article History	Abstract
Received: 06 June 2023 Revised: 05 Sept 2023 Accepted: 18 Nov 2023 CC License CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0	The research work focuses on analyzing Ismat Chughtai writing styles. From the analysis it was deduced that Ismat used humor in the plots, and casual communications between the novel characters to strike a sarcasm on the societal malpractices with needed instant eradication. The popularity of Ismat Chughtai's work could be credited to her plain and simple language and the exact representation of the society especially the plight of women in the society post-independence. Chughtai began her writing in the second wave of feminism and therefore she hampered the progress of patriarchy in society. The research work presents vivid aspects of Chughtai's writing skill and concludes that Chughtai is nothing but a trailblazer of feminism in independent India. Keywords: Eradication, feminism, sarcasm, societal

1. Introduction

India is country that is known for its diversity, religious tolerance, and gender equality. This present form of India societal setting is getting closer to the era that was prevalent before the advent of Britishers in India. However, after the advent of Britishers the Indian societal setting got painted into a different color. Caste discrimination was common, women were deemed fit only for pity works and civil rights were highly compromised. In their own country Indian males were treated as a third-class citizen. If this was the conditions of males in India during the British rule the conditions of women could be easily imagined. During the British rule the caste discrimination was at its peak mainly due to the introduction of caste hierarchy by the Britishers in cloak of a census. Oppression of civil rights were also maximized by the British civil servants specially for women, who were not allowed to occupy high ranking post and were deemed fit as a housekeeper, house maid, or at times as keep. As the India achieved independence the independent India soon began to shed its colonial skins, but this was a continuous process filled with bumps and triggers. These bumps and triggers of hatred, patriarchy, and communal disharmony seeded by the Britishers during their rule would hinder the shedding process. It is important to note that Indian society before Britishers was progressive. Numerous battles were fought by armies under female general, a practice which was shunned by the Britishers rather they looked women as an inferior creation of God. When India snatched independence from the clutches of British rule it began to uproot the bumps and triggers hindering the societal transformation. The first act the independent Indian government took was to impart voting rights to all men and women. This was done without a debate contrary to the Britishers and Americans. This kick started a process of empowering women with sense of equality which can be equated to what is experienced by the Indian Men. This processing of imparting equality to women as that of men is termed as feminism.

The concept of feminism held no grounds in India before Britishers as Indian women already enjoyed high status in family and society, righteous place in work, sexuality, femininity, leadership, and decision-making ability. After Britishers the Indian society went into a societal transition. Patriarchy blossomed too much in India as it blossomed in British native land. Slow process of shedding colonial skin out from Indian culture compelled Indian women to live in conditions where patriarchy decides a genders fate, bars their sexuality and femininity, and gentility. In other words, due to slow societal transition back to Indian roots the women in Indian society experienced excessive exploitations of all possible forms. This led to the rise of culture which at present has gained a cult status i.e., demand for feminism. Feminism in plain and simple words is the right of a woman to enjoy the same rights and freedom as enjoyed by the opposite sex. In every society poet, authors, and writers are the instruments

of social change. Through their pen and thoughts, they provoke society to strive for a positive change. Ismat Chughtai is one such writer who delivered a specific type of content to her readers i.e., a demand of feminism in no-complex and no-decorative language, rather than using words of Hindi, English, and Urdu that would have been classified as slangs otherwise.

But before deep diving into the writing styles of Ismat Chughtai it is essential to understand feminism from the Indian perspective. This is essential as her writings are critically centered around Indian women fighting hard for their femininity, eradication of social pressure that pressurized a woman towards a natural, religious, and cultural tradition and reclaiming the lost sexuality.

Feminism in India

Feminism in India is a multifaceted and dynamic movement that seeks to address and combat gender-based inequalities and discrimination invoked because of years of moral, cultural, and physical slavery. It has a rich history and continues to evolve to address contemporary issues faced by women and gender minorities in India. Here are some key aspects of feminism in India: -

1. **Historical Context:** The roots of feminism in India can be traced back to the 19th century when social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar advocated for women's education and the abolition of practices like sati (the immolation of widows). The suffragette movement in colonial India also laid the foundation for women's participation in politics.
2. **First-Wave Feminism:** The early 20th century saw the emergence of first-wave feminism in India, with women like Sarojini Naidu and Annie Besant advocating for women's suffrage and equal rights. This period also witnessed the formation of women's organizations and movements.
3. **Second-Wave Feminism:** The 1960s and 1970s marked the onset of second-wave feminism in India. This phase focused on issues such as gender inequality, patriarchy, and the rights of women in various spheres of life. It was during this period that feminist literature, activism, and consciousness began to gain momentum.
4. **Issues Addressed:** Feminism in India addresses a wide range of issues, including gender-based violence (such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, and dowry-related violence), unequal access to education and healthcare, workplace discrimination, reproductive rights, and the representation of women in politics and media.
5. **Diverse Feminist Movements:** India's feminist movement is diverse and encompasses various strands, including liberal feminism, radical feminism, ecofeminism, and intersectional feminism. Different feminist groups and individuals may prioritize different issues and employ various strategies to bring about change.
6. **Challenges and Controversies:** Feminism in India faces challenges such as backlash from conservative groups, cultural norms, and resistance to gender equality. Some feminists also engage in debates around issues like caste, class, religion, and sexuality, recognizing the intersectionality of oppression.
7. **Legal Reforms:** Feminist activism in India has led to significant legal reforms. For example, the dowry system was criminalized, laws against sexual harassment at the workplace were enacted, and changes were made to inheritance and property rights for women.
8. **Representation and Leadership:** Women have played prominent roles in Indian politics, with Indira Gandhi serving as the first female Prime Minister. Women leaders have continued to make strides in politics and other fields.
9. **Feminist Organizations:** Numerous feminist organizations and NGOs operate in India, working on issues ranging from reproductive health and gender violence to economic empowerment and legal advocacy.
10. **Global Connections:** Indian feminists are part of the global feminist movement and collaborate with international organizations and activists to address global issues like gender-based violence and climate change.
11. **Feminism in India is a vibrant and evolving movement that seeks to challenge patriarchal norms and promote gender equity. It draws inspiration from its historical roots while adapting to the changing social, cultural, and political landscape of modern India.**

Writing Styles of Ismat Chughtai

Ismat began to write in her prominent flamboyant and unrestricted style in the second wave of feminism. The second wave of feminism as stated above gave a decisive blow to concept of patriarchy in Indian society from there the presence of patriarchy in every sphere of the society began to either shrink in size or got popped completely. Ismat's writing gained popularity in both middle- and higher-income groups. The popularity was due to simple language and writing what exactly came into her heart without getting excessively into decorating the fictional settings of a novel. Here are some of the key writing methods and characteristics associated with Ismat Chughtai's work: -

1. **Realism:** Ismat Chughtai's writing was deeply rooted in realism. She often depicted the everyday lives of people, especially women, in a candid and unflinching manner. Her stories and characters felt relatable and authentic, making her work resonate with readers.
2. **Bold and Fearless:** Chughtai was not afraid to tackle taboo subjects and societal norms that were often considered off-limits in her time. She fearlessly explored topics such as female sexuality, gender roles, and the inner thoughts and desires of women, often challenging traditional norms and expectations.
3. **Complex Characters:** Her characters were multi-dimensional and complex. Chughtai delved into the inner thoughts, desires, and struggles of her characters, providing readers with a deep understanding of their motivations and experiences.
4. **Feminist Perspective:** Ismat Chughtai was a feminist, and her writing reflected her commitment to women's rights and empowerment. Her stories often portrayed the struggles faced by women in a patriarchal society and highlighted the need for gender equality.
5. **Social Commentary:** Chughtai's writing served as a powerful tool for social commentary. Through her stories, she critiqued societal injustices, hypocrisies, and prejudices. Her work would often shed light on the complexities of human relationships and the impact of societal norms on individuals.
6. **Use of Humor:** Chughtai had a keen sense of humor, and she often used wit and satire in her writing to critique societal norms and conventions. Her humor added depth to her storytelling and made her work engaging.
7. **Regional Flavor:** Her stories were often set in the backdrop of North Indian culture, and she skillfully incorporated the nuances of the region into her writing, giving her work a strong sense of place and culture.
8. **Short Stories:** Ismat Chughtai was particularly known for her short stories. Her ability to capture complex emotions and social issues within the confines of short narratives showcased her storytelling prowess.
9. **Controversial Themes:** Chughtai's willingness to address controversial themes and her candid exploration of sexuality and desire in her stories sometimes led to legal challenges and censorship. Despite this, she remained steadfast in her commitment to honest storytelling.
10. **Influence:** Ismat Chughtai's writing has had a lasting influence on Urdu literature, particularly in the realm of feminist and progressive literature. Her work has inspired subsequent generations of writers to address issues of gender and society with greater openness and courage.

Analyzing the works of Ismat Chughtai in novels like *Masoom*, *Ajeeb Admi*, *Lihaf*, and *lifting the veil* she would easily be termed as a trailblazing writer who addressed issues of sexuality with remarkable openness and frankness in her works, challenging the conservative norms of her time. Her writing on sexuality can be characterized by the following key aspects:

Breaking Taboos: Ismat Chughtai was known for her courage in addressing taboo subjects related to sexuality in her stories. She fearlessly explored topics such as female desire, sexual repression, and unconventional relationships, all of which were considered controversial and largely unexplored in Urdu literature at the time.

Female Sexuality: Chughtai's writings often focused on the inner lives and desires of women. Her stories, such as "*Lihaaf*" (*The Quilt*), are notable for their exploration of female sexuality and desire. "*Lihaaf*" specifically dealt with a lesbian relationship and was considered scandalous when it was first published.

Critique of Patriarchy: Chughtai used her storytelling to critique the patriarchal norms and societal pressures that restricted women's sexuality and autonomy. Her works shed light on the oppressive nature of traditional gender roles and the impact they had on women's lives and desires.

Complex Characters: Chughtai created multi-dimensional characters with complex sexual identities and desires. Her characters often struggled with societal expectations and norms, leading to internal conflicts that were central to her narratives.

Subversion of Gender Norms: Through her characters and narratives, Chughtai subverted traditional gender norms and challenged the idea that women should be passive and devoid of sexual agency. Her female characters were portrayed as active agents in their own lives.

Social Commentary: While exploring sexuality, Chughtai's writing also served as a powerful tool for social commentary. She used her stories to critique the hypocrisy and double standards prevalent in society when it came to sexual matters.

Controversy and Legal Challenges: Chughtai's bold and candid approach to sexuality sometimes led to legal challenges. She faced obscenity charges for her writings, including "Lihaaf," which resulted in a court case. However, she defended her work as an honest reflection of societal realities.

Feminist Perspective: Chughtai's exploration of sexuality was closely intertwined with her feminist perspective. She believed in women's right to express their desires and make choices about their own bodies and lives, challenging the idea that women should conform to society's expectations.

Summary

In summary, Ismat Chughtai's writing methods were characterized by her fearless exploration of societal issues, her commitment to feminism, her realistic portrayal of characters and settings, and her use of humor and satire to critique norms and conventions. However, this openness, frankness, and habit of striking the bad in society with the hammer of writing ink landed her in legal soup. She was dragged into the court due to her publication 'Lihaaf or the Quilt'. However, due to the audacity of staying calm and sticking to what is right and necessary for the balance of society, i.e., feminism, she defended herself in court with simple honesty. Ismat Chughtai came from a north Indian family setting. The women in the region of North India experience more regressive patriarchy as compared to other parts of India. Due to this the novels of Ismat are filled with high quality feminism references contextual to North Indian society settings. Ismat uses ordinary English words to represent the plight of women to the readers however, it is due to her this ability she is a not ordinary writer. Humor finds a permanent position in her novel. It is to be noted that humor in novels of Ismat Chughtai is always associated with a sarcastic undertone. If one analyzes novels of Ismat closely they would come to know that her novels are commentary of India societal setting just after independence. Novels of Ismat explored candid taboos like sexual feelings of a woman, her own perception of sexuality, her identity and quest for satisfaction along with limitless wandering of mental thoughts for sexual satisfaction.

4. Conclusion

To conclude with Ismat's writing could be categorized as in two ways i.e., in a way where writing is straight from the future because of the technique she used to present Lesbian relationship, a topic taboo till date, in Lihaaf and in another way as a time capsule which presented the society with exact historical societal setting despite carrying a fictional tone. At present her legacy continues to be celebrated for its boldness and relevance in addressing complex human experiences and social injustices.

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