

## Gynocriticism in Ismat Chughtais Short Stories

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Gynocriticism is actually a by-product of feminist literary criticism. Feminist writers refuse to accept the 'images of women' as portrayed by male writers. They are of the view that characters portrayed by the men in literature are lacking in authenticity. <sup>1</sup>Elaine Showalter  $\frac{1}{4}$ 1979-1986 $\frac{1}{2}$  named 'gynocritics', or the issue of women as writer<sup>2</sup>. Gynocriticism is a broad and varied field, and any generalizations about it should be treated with caution. The subjects of Gynocriticism are, she says, the history, styles, themes, genres and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity; the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution or laws of a female literary tradition<sup>3</sup>. It is a woman-centered way of approaching a literary tradition of women's writing. Gynocriticism celebrated a distinctive "voice" in women's cultural position as an oppressed group; of women's experiences, especially experience of male domination and of female bonding; and of psychological traits supposedly typical of women such as empathy fluid ego boundaries.

The Feminists believe that in order to understand woman's position in the world, one has to understand the system of Patriarchy. Men all over the world looked at women from their point of view. And not only that they have also taught and even forced women to look at themselves from male point of view. Feminism is an ideology which seeks not only to understand the world but to change it to the advantage of women. He opines that woman's idea

Of herself as inferior to man and dependent on him springs from her realizations that "the world is masculine on the whole, those who fashioned it today are men."<sup>4</sup>

"Gynocriticism seeks to formulate a female framework for the analysis of women's literature 'to develop new models based on the study of female experience rather than to adopt male models and theories. Working as 'gynocritics' women had tried reading male-created texts producing a literary category as 'the women-centered criticism. The 'feminist critique' involves the feminist as a reader offering different interpretations of the images of women projected in the male created texts. Women writers by way of challenging and recasting the male gaze in literature, rewrite and recreate the male-created text from the feminist perspective."<sup>4</sup>

Ismat Chughtai was Urdu Literature's most courageous and controversial writer. As the Indian subcontinent's foremost Feminist writer was instinctively aware of the gendered double standard in the largely feudal and patriarchal structure of the society she lived and did everything to expose and subvert it.<sup>5</sup> Ismat Chughtai was aware of societies; deeply depicted heart touching conditions of women through her short stories. She presented beautiful and real scenario in front of readers.

"A Pair of Hands" (Do Hath) is a remarkable story which presents duality and hypocrisy of the society. Whole story revolves around old sweepress and Gauri (her daughter in law) Gauri is wife of Ram Avatar, the sweeper who is a fourth class employee in army. After his marriage with Gauri he left her as he got intimation from army. After Ram Avatar's departure the length of Gauri's veil begins to decrease. Due to this seemingly indecent behavior of Gauri the women of neighbourhood complain to the old sweepress and suggest her to send her daughter in law back to her parent's home. The old sweepress totally disagrees to their suggestions and says that she

Cannot send her back to her parents as she has by sum of her for Rs. 200 and a part of this she had spent on the wedding and if she send her away, Gauri's father would sell her away to some other sweeper and it would be more expensive for her to get another daughter-in-law as it would cost her not less than Rs. 400 and very pathetically says that as given in the story: "A daughter-in-law not only warms a son's bed, she also lodes the work of four people... A well built stalwart daughter-in-law like this one not behead for less than four hundred now". But when she bears all activities of her daughter-in-law she beats her badly even she does not cares that Gauri works thought the day in the own house and even in the houses of others.

This shows the poor status of woman that woman is treated as on object to be sold and bought. Women are treated as property, as objects of exchange between men, a transaction which denies then an individual's identity. Woman are "Commodified as sexual creature to serve male desire " Simone de

Beauvoir used the term "Subject" and "Other" to show the real place of women in patriarchy. The "Subject" is the man who controls and rules over the woman and the "Other" is the woman who is supposed to have no identity of her own. She is not regarded as an "autonomous being" and "appear essentially to the as a sexual being"<sup>5</sup> Simon de Beauvoir theory which she presents in "The Second Sex" fully explored by Ismat Chughtai in the story "A Pair of Hands".

Another heart touching incident narrated in the story is; it is too difficult for lower strata people to survive. When the son of old sweepress brother-in-law Rati Ram comes to visit the sweepress and stay on. Rati ram and Gauri got involved get physically, people complain to old sweepress but sweepress says that "people have become their enemies for nothing." The old sweepress does not listen to their complaints because she knows the secrets of much higher class

Families but she keeps all those things in deep of her heart but when the same thing is done by her daughter in law people comment her she wants to give reaction but not gives. The old sweepress is not capable to answer those higher strata people because she is a woman of lower strata and she has no right to comment on their secrets. In the story readers find when Gauri is not involved with Rati Ram all male workers and male of family get entertainment from her indecent attitude but when she does not give them lift all of them stand against her. Men duality reflected here. Finally Ram Avatar accepts the child as his own. The latter story ends with an encomium to poor laborers these hands were neither legitimate nor illegitimate; they were only hands that wash away the filth from the face of this planet, that carry the weight of its ageing.

The story "The Wedding Shroud" is a realistic description of lower Muslim family. The story is narrated by younger daughter Hameeda about her elder sister, in which she narrates all the attempt of her family to find husband for the ill-fated Kubra. The pictorial description given by Ismat Chughtai is remarkable for commenting society. Kubra is an over age girl working whole day. Kubra's mother is a tailor and specialist to stitches the cloth of nuptial custom. One day she gets telegram that his second brother's son Rahat come their home as he has police training. This news creates a hope in Amma's mind for Kubra. She quickly calls her maternal sister, Both Amma and her sister are murmuring something about Kubra the Amma gives her gold rings to sell and by that money she brings material for wedding shroud. When Rahat reaches their home they cook food for his and mother and daughters work harder to get his consent for Kubra but finally Rahat goes back home as his marriage is decided earlier. The life of all these three becomes deplorable. All these events of the story define that daughters are burden and this burden spoils the life of whole family.

Bicchu phuppi is beautiful story by Ismat Chughtai, which presents a loving relationship of a sister and a brother. The most towering character in the story is Bicchu Phuppi. Her name is Badshahi Khanam. From her external behavior, readers find her very strict and rough. As the story goes on Badshahi Khanam appears as an amiable character that is a very soft and loving for her brother and for his family.

Actually Badshahi Khanam is a girl who gets lots of love and facilities as she is a single sister of three brothers. She is very dominating and adorable for her brothers from her childhood. But unfortunately she is married a man who is not full of character. He has illegal relationship with Sweepress and when Khanam knows about this fact she feels being cheated and detached from her husband and this feeling of being cheated crushed her emotions badly. No incident in the story tells that she shares her grief with anybody and when someone does not share her/his grief a mental disorder occurs. This also happens with Badshahi Khanam and such type of grief poisons her tongue to reduce the frustration, which she faces as woman. When she curses her husband, ironically her brothers show sympathy with their husband and not with her. Such attitude of her brothers is cause of social prejudice according to which extra marital affair for man is not a sin, no one feels magnitude of her grief. We find deplorable condition of women because man is always free to select the life as he wants. After her husband's betrayal she wears white cloth but no one feels her suffocations.

This shows that woman's life and her emotions have no values. Ismat Chughtai shows her brilliant thought through this character to glimpse our society's attitude towards woman.

### Works Cited

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