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**TRANSGRESSION AND RESISTANCE: A POSTCOLONIAL FEMINIST
ANALYSIS OF ISMAT CHUGHTAI'S KAGHZI HAI PAIRAHAN**

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Abstract

This is a postcolonial feminist analysis of Ismat Chughtai's work 'Kaghzi Hai Pairahan'. Chughtai highlights the plight of third world women who are doubly colonized by both colonialism and patriarchy. This study analyses how women in the third world especially in the subcontinent are silenced, oppressed and marginalized through various orthodox socio-cultural structures. Postcolonial feminism as a theoretical framework seeks to redress the misrepresentation of the third world women by the white western feminism. Western feminism misrepresents the third world women through their essentialist discourse ignoring their racial, cultural, social, and political specificities; and doing so, act as oppressors of their "sisters". Ismat Chughtai in 'Kaghzi Hai Pairahan' narrates her own story of heroic struggle, resistance and success giving hope to women who find themselves shackled by the clutches of social and cultural taboos. She exposes the hypocrisy of the society by bringing to light the contradictions that mark the social set up and values. This research draws on insights from Spivak's famous essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' and Mohanty's Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses and shows that postcolonial feminism asserts

the alterity, agency and difference of the third women as discrete and distinct categories that western feminism cannot account for.

Introduction

Ismat Chughtai (1911-91) is one of the most controversial and courageous writers of Urdu literature. She was born in UP in India in a family that was both well- educated and well off. The Chughtai family was a big extended family with ten children and a large number of close relatives. From the very beginning she knew that freedom in her family was only for boys and as a girl she had no such luxury. As she says 'Our family was progressive, but this attitude was acceptable only for boys. I was after all just a girl. Every woman in the family –mother, aunt, sister—was terrorized. Society had a fixed station for her. If she overstepped these limits, she would have to pay the price. Too much education was dangerous'. (Chughtai 2009, p.xiii). As she was ninth child in the family, her birth was treated with heart-breaking indifference. This created a sense of alienation and loneliness that stayed with her throughout her life. She vividly describes the trial and tribulations of a childhood that was lost to the tyranny of the patriarchal society in her autobiography 'Kaghzi Hai Pairahan' and some short stories.

KHP was published in Aaj Kal from 1979 to 1980 as separate chapters. There are fourteen chapters in it. Each of these chapters was about a certain phase of life. As she herself said to the editor

'I'm sending the second chapter. I am trying to record from my memory the events that affected me and what I had heard from conversations in the family, the tensions inherent in every class, new questions and their resolution—all this is so complicated. I will send you whatever gets written at any point of time. Let them be published under different titles. The sequence might be worked out while editing them [for the volume]' (Chughtai,2013, p. X)

Ismat Chughtai highlights the plight of women in a retrogressive patriarchal society in the subcontinent that does not give women their due right ignoring their agency and potential. Women are deprived of their fundamental rights to education, property and dignity, and face humiliation in every field of life.

Inspired by the Progressive movement in Urdu literature which vied for radical shake up of capitalist system and demanded rights for the working class and freedom of choice and action for women, Chughtai's works reflect her Marxist leanings. Shamsie (2016) says that Chughtai in her writings focused on middle class gentility, female sexuality, marginalization of women, and exploitation of the working class. In line with progressive movement, Chughtai discards gaudy and artificial writing style that was in vogue at that time and adopts simple, direct writing style that can be characterized as 'literary realism' (P.1) She was clearly influenced and inspired by Manto's writings. Her major works 'The Quilt', 'The Crooked Lane', 'The Innocent Girl' and 'The Heart Breaks Free' are based on her observations and experiences of everyday life of middle class men and women of the subcontinent.

"Appearing on the scene during the heyday of the Progressive Writers' Movement, which changed the complexion of Urdu literature in significant ways, Ismat remained a progressive in the true sense of the term throughout her life, even though the movement dissipated shortly after Independence in 1947". (Chughtai,2013, p. IX)

Naqvi (1993) says that economic injustice, social and sexual exploitation, class struggle and religious orthodoxy remained major concerns in her writings. He further says that her fictional world is embedded with 'the existentialist and humanist elements' (p.117). She was very honest, direct and brutal in depiction of life that she lived and experienced. As she herself says; "In my stories I've put down everything with objectivity. Now, if people find them obscene, let them go to hell. It's my belief that experience can never be obscene if they are based on authentic realities of life. These people think that there's nothing wrong if they do things behind the curtains... They are halfwits". (Chughtai,2009, p.i)

In Kaghzi Hai Pairahan that she wrote in her later years of life Chughtai has discussed the issues and challenges faced by the third world women; the experiences that western feminism cannot account for. She believes religion, class and caste marginalize women. Illiteracy and economic disparity are also important factors in this regard.

Ayesha Iqbal has narrated the contribution of the 'Fallen Women of Urdu Literature' of Progressive Writers' Movement in her weblog in detail.

- She says that these 'fallen women' writers were iconoclasts. They challenged all the social and cultural taboos that were embedded in literary tradition. Women were presented in traditional literature as objects and as 'puppets of men's imagination' --- as voiceless soft creatures that were incapable of being agents of change and she terms them 'songs without words'. These writers turned this tradition upside down with their proactive and vigorous presentation of bold women challenging both religious orthodoxy and patriarchy. They were nonconformists in their personal lives; and their writings were immensely provocative and controversial.
- The Progressive Writers' Movement provided women writers space to articulate courage, resistance and sexuality. Khadija Mastur, Ismat Chughtai and Rashid Jahan were very powerful voices of this movement. They are credited with exploring hitherto untouched social taboos.
- Ismat Chughtai and some other female writers described sex vividly in their writings. They used expletive and suggestive language creating a lot of controversy. Her writing was termed obscene.
- These women waged a pitched battle against the traditional, conformist and conservative thought. They remained undaunted and undeterred. They expanded the canvas of women writing bringing energy and life into it.

Postcolonial feminism provides space for the third world women to theorize and articulate their experiences in their context. Promod K Nayyar says that postcolonial feminism is 'a convergence of feminism as well as postcolonial criticism' (Nayyar,2008, p.159). The common ground between the two is resistance against oppression, patriarchy. Postcolonial feminism exposes the nexus between colonialism and patriarchy that combined to suppress the women in a way that left no room for any kind of freedom. It also sheds light on the factors in which colonial strategies were abetted and aided by the patriarchal structures (Schwarz & Ray, 2005). These points of view differentiate postcolonial feminism from other conventional forms of feminism. The voices of other subaltern and women are highlighted and emphasized through postcolonial feminist reconstructive rereading. Therefore, it becomes inevitable to study the South Asian countries, especially sub-continent region of the world, from the perspective of postcolonial feminism in order to identify how the oppression, violence and marginalization of women become crucial because of "the intersection of caste, patriarchy, religion, class, gender, region, race, colonialism and socio-political power structures as well as identities" (Mishra, 2013, p. 3).

Literature Review

Feminism has always focused on women's emancipation and equality in the backdrop of female oppression and struggle for freedom. Women empowerment became a concern later on. Waging a war for the rights of women in various of fields of life, feminist movements have worked for greater role for women in everyday life focusing on the ways and means the women can discover their identity and potential as women, demanding radical changes in social structures that hold women hostage in their clutches.

Postcolonial feminism is influenced by various other theories such as Marxism, poststructuralism, postmodernism and psychoanalysis. All these approaches deconstruct patriarchy, racism, colonization, gender and address the issues such as subalternity, marginalization, othering and alterity. Intemaan et al. (2010) in their seminal article titled *What Lies Ahead – The Future of Feminist Philosophy* analyze the contemporary existence of women in this world and then present their critical insight in terms of the future of feminism. They outline the ways and strategies that should be taken into account regarding the future of feminism coupled with the considerations of the comprehension of this field of studies within the domain of "the concrete experiences of coloniality as well as the woman of color" (Mukherjee, 2018, p. 2). They are also of the view that women should not be understood "as an abstract category in a global context" (p. 2).

Mukherjee (2018) claims that the native scholars and western orientalist have failed to comprehend the complex nexus of "locating the cultural identities" (Mukherjee, 2018, p. 3) because these scholars have misrepresented the nation as "singular monolithic culture" (Narayan, 2013, p. 79), moreover, the ideas of identity and tradition are presented as homogeneous in their nature. The abstract universalization of feminist theories is challenged by postcolonial feminism which focuses on the local and native experience. Narayan contends that that postcolonial feminism should focus on how colonization influence, refashioned and redefined local traditions and customs (Narayan, 2013). The western feminists have not been able to portray the patriarchal structure in the postcolonial societies in an efficient and effective ways, therefore, as Sara in her work *Contemporary Feminist Theories* (1998) points out that "the existence of women in postcolonial societies should be taken into account and analyzed by the native feminists who understand the ground realities in better ways than alien feminists who are not aware of the internal mechanism of postcolonial societies" (Jackson, 1998, p. 17). In other words, the representation of women in the non-western countries by western feminists is not according to the ground realities which are hidden under the complex nexus of social and cultural circumstances as well as socio-political values.

Tyagi (2014) is of the view that White or Western feminists have overlooked the ground realities, such as cultural, historical and racial specificities of non-western women. These issues could actually serve as stepping stone in terms of the representation of these women. Unfortunately, white feminist discourse that silenced the existence as well as rights of non-western or colonized women has been imposed on the colonized women. In the same way, Loomba (1998) studies in detail the concepts of postcolonialism and the word "colonial" in her influential work *Colonialism/postcolonialism: Situating colonial and postcolonial studies* and contends that "in postcolonial, the word 'post' implicitly implies the aftermath of colonization" (Loomba, 1998, p. 84). She urges for the critical space that pulverizes the nexus between colonialism and patriarchy and gives voice to the oppressed in the society including women.

Women writers have always been prominent in Urdu literature and they have equally excelled in autobiography writing. One of the earliest autobiographies in Urdu was, in fact, written by a woman. The important autobiographies in Urdu written by women include 'Beeti Kahani' by Shehr Bano Begum (1885), Tuzk-i-Sultani (1903) by Sultan Jahan Begum of Bhopal, Zamana-i-Tehseel (1906) by Atiya Fyze, Nairang-i- Bakhat (1942) by Vazeer Sultan Begum , Aik Actress ki Aap Beeti (1942) by Bimla Kahani, Azadi ki Chhaaon Mein (1975) by Anees Qidvai , Silsila-i-Roz-o-Shab (1984) by Sualiha Abid Hussein , Jo rahi so be khabari rahi (1995) by Ada Jafri, Hum Safar (1995) by Hameeda Akhtar Hussain Raipuri, Buri aurat ki Katha (1995) by Kishwer Naheed, Dagar se hat kar (1996) by Saeeda Bano Ahmed , Parde se parliament tak (2002) by Begum Shaista Ikramullah , and Zindgi ki Yaaden (2003) by Begum Jahan Ara Habibullah. Thus we see that women in every age have expressed themselves boldly in their autobiographies and memoirs. These autobiographies are social, cultural and political histories of their times and are important chronicles of human consciousness in the respective eras. Ismat Chughtai by virtue of her courageous and outrageous writings stands apart from the rest of the writers. She was a radical feminist and member of Progressive Writer's Movement as well. Qurratulain Hyder (1927-2007) was another literary giant. She was a prolific writer. Her epic 'Aag Ka Darya' covers time period of two thousand years and ends with the partition. It is one of the classics of world literature. Bano Qudsia (1928-2017) is famous for her monumental work 'Raja Gidh'. She wrote many short stories, novels and dramas. She wrote on social and cultural issues. She wrote with circumspect and preached social and cultural conformity in her works. Kishwar Naheed (1940-) is known for her progressive ideas. She has written both short stories and poems. Fahmida Riaz (1946-) is famous for political activism and her fight against oppression and totalitarianism. She is famous for her publication 'Awaz'.

Ayesha Iqbal in her article 'The Fallen Women of Urdu Literature' has discussed the women writers who rejected patriarchy and rebelled against the social and cultural taboos.

"When some of these writers chose to push the existing boundaries of the traditional way of writing, they were branded as controversial, bold, outspoken, and overtly frank. However, it is only when you touch the strings, sounding some deeper human chords, that you become Manto; when you courageously and radically question male supremacy that you emerge as Rashid Jahan; when you fearlessly break through the network of pressures and constraints that you grow to be Ismat Chughtai; and when you stop censoring your words and let them flow unabashed that you turn out to be Kishwar Naheed or Fahmida Riaz".

In Kaghazi Hai Pairahan, Chughtai describes her experience of growing up in a conservative family that did not encourage women to take active part in life. Like a traditional family of the age, the family required that women observed purdah and avoided social gathering. She had to fight very hard to win her rights and freedom. We find an intimate view of Chughtai's encounters with orthodoxy, patriarchy and society. Her autobiography lays bare the tyrannies of the society. Rabia (2018) in her seminal article titled as Kaghazi Hai Pairahan: A Feminist Voice mentions that Chughtai's master piece "provides an authentic and delightful account of several crucial years of her life" (Rabia, 2018, p. 1). The writer very explicitly presents a vivid description of childhood days of her life coupled with the experiences of living in a Muslim society (Rabia, 2018, p. 2). Naqvi (2005) while discussing influences that helped Chughtai's mindset says that she shaped her "revolutionary literary intellect" (Naqvi, 2005, p. 9) by working as a translator of Russian and French Fiction. Her inspirations from French and Russian Fiction are comprised of "Chekov, Tolstoy, Gorky, Zola and Maupassant whom she always enjoyed while reading" (p. 10).

Furthermore, in one of her interviews on Russian literature, Chughtai remarks that "I believe in Chekov, I read him to be blessed" (p. 13). She was greatly influenced by the Russian and French writers who focused on the problems faced by women in their routine life. Being inspired by these authors, she introduced psychological elements in Urdu literature. Jamal (2017) contends that studying Kaghzi Hai Pairahan one comes across "position of women of author's contemporary society" (Jamal, 2017, p. 3), with special focus on Muslim women of that time. Furthermore, Jamal points out that the author was very much concerned about the depiction of "women's silencing" (p. 3) in the society. A critical study of Chughtai writings shows that she challenged patriarchal society at every step and argued a case for female agency. Mazumdar (2014) in his thought provoking article Ismat Chughtai: A woman above all rightly says that Chughtai "was an educationist, an iconologist and a representative of women empowerment" (Mazumdar, 2014).

Bajaj commends Chughtai for unapologetic approach in her fiction and non-fiction. He says Chughtai's writing 'stands apart from the work of her contemporaries due to the unapologetic exploration of feminine experience of discrimination, agency, social norms, politics, and desire which was previously not something that Urdu literature had experienced'. (Bajaj,2020)

Theoretical Framework

Third world feminism has challenged the eurocentrism of the first world feminism. Focus has now shifted to differences among women of different regions, religions, races, castes and cultures. Third world feminism has included body politics issues which were earlier ignored by the western feminism. Whereas liberal feminism demanded equality for women, the socialist and Marxist feminism on the plight of the working women advocating better working conditions and wages for women. Radical feminism marked a sharp break from earlier waves of feminism focusing on the oppression of the women. Afro-American challenged the essentialist western feminist discourse by rejecting the concept of universal womanhood. For black feminist writers slavery, race and economic inequality were the key issues. They worked for the civil rights movements. Sexual exploitation also became an important issue in this evolution of different strands of feminism. Third world women also raised issues similar to Afro-American feminists highlighting the exploitation of the women. In postcolonial societies women are trapped in the vicious practices of tradition and modernization.

What led Third world feminism to establish itself as an alternative to western feminism is western feminism's failure to accept the existence of third world women as a separate category and consequently complete neglect of their problems. The western feminists theorized about the third world women from their Eurocentric perspective. Doing so, they ignored the distinctiveness and difference of the third world women and their own set of religious, social, cultural and traditional issues. The western hegemonic feminist discourse did little to redress the imbalance between the western and eastern women. Rather than redressing the imbalance, the western feminist discourse further perpetuated its superiority and supremacy over the third world feminist discourse.

Third world feminists have successfully challenged the western feminist discourse establishing the differences that exist between women across the globe especially among the third world women themselves. Spivak and Mohanty have been very influential in advocating the cause and case of third world women.

Spivak is one of the leading postcolonial theorists. Her major work is translation of Derrida's 'Of Grammatology', but she is more famous for her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak'? In this essay she describes in detail the circumstances and events leading to the 'sati' or suicide of a young Bengali woman. Spivak contends that 'sati' shows the young woman's failure to speak for herself. Hence in the given circumstances, the subaltern could not speak. Spivak, however, was very critical of the misinterpretation of her use of term 'subaltern' suggesting that subaltern should not be used as an equivalent of 'other' or without context. Like Mohanty, she is also of the view that the marginalization, domestic issues, patriarchy and oppression of postcolonial women cannot be investigated and presented by the western feminists objectively because they are not aware of the ground realities of non-western social, cultural and political structures (Spivak, 1999).

Spivak in her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak'? challenges western feminists' right to speak on behalf of the third world women. She contends that western feminist discourse homogenizes third world women erasing differences among them. Rather than representing the third world women, the western feminist discourse misrepresents them. The western discourse denies third world women voice, agency and representation. She contends the religious, cultural, racial, and caste based differences among the third world women cannot be ignored. Spivak is very critical of French High Feminism for its total neglect of alterity and differences among the third world women. Spivak rejects the 'civilizing mission' and its normative doctrines that undervalued the Indian culture. She believes colonial neglect of women has further subjugated the women in India who are already suffering at the hands of patriarchal social structure. She says "if in contest of the colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (1988, p.287). She is of the opinion that western discourse further marginalizes Indian women. She condemns colonial representation of 'sati' as tyrannical and self-immolation; rather she believes "it should have been read with martyrdom (p.302)

Chandra Mohanty (1984) in her landmark work challenges the hegemonic western feminist discourse that homogenizes the third world women as same and fixed. She says "Western feminists assume that all women are a coherent group with identical interests and desires without taking into consideration their class, ethnicity, racial formation, or different circumstances" (p.337). Mohanty is very critical of misrepresentation of the third world women in the western discourse. She contends that heterogeneity characterizes the third world women. She is also very skeptical about the stereotyping the third world women as the 'veiled woman, 'the chaste virgin' and 'obedient wife' etc. According to Mohanty such grouping of women results in 'rob[bing] them of their historical and political agency' (p.337). The crux of Mohanty's argument is that third world women must be contextualized and theorized in their specificities of religion, caste, race and economic status. As she contends 'careful, historically specific generalizations responsive to complex realities (Ibid).g first/third – world connections (p. 352)

Mohanty (1986) claims that Third World women's existence and life style in this world is quite different than western women's mode of life, therefore, the socio-cultural traditions and family treatments are also different because of this difference (Mohanty, 2003, p. 122). Moreover, because of the change of geographical, historical as well as economic changes in these two regions of the world, the issues and problems of women in their respective milieu become different from each other. The important point raised by Mohanty in her work is the misrepresentation of postcolonial women at the hands of western feminists or critics. The main forces of exploitation for women of the non-western countries are

comprised of patriarchy, orthodox culture, traditional family mind-set and old cultural practices. Mohanty has given a distinguished voice to the marginalized and oppressed section of society, that is, women of postcolonial regions (Mohanty, 1986, p. 218). The patriarchal practices at home and male superiority in the social and political structures work as a catalyst to exploit women's body and soul. The field of political project presented by western feminists is severely criticized by Mohanty because these feminists claim that Third World Women are nothing but maltreated as well as victimized stereotypes and homogeneous entities (Mohanty, 2003). She also criticizes the hegemonic approach of western critics in terms of the misrepresentation of postcolonial women.

Both Mohanty and Spivak contend that the third world women can be represented by the third world feminists as only they can understand the complex social and cultural contexts in which the third world women live. The idea of 'universal woman' does not exist in practice. Heterogeneity and not homogeneity should be the norm if the postcolonial female alterity is to be taken into account. Women are doubly colonized and marginalized in the third world. This suppression does not let women speak. Thus we see that both Mohanty and Spivak reject western feminist discourse about third world women and present an alternative third world postcolonial feminist discourse that focuses on the differences among the women.

Analysis and Discussions

Ismat Chughtai despite being maligned by media and targeted by state institutions for disregarding social norms and promoting a dangerous discourse that could undermine both social norms and religious sensibilities continued to write provocatively on social taboos. Her writing marked by social realism and equipped with critical venom shocked the readers and general public, and she continued to do so remorselessly and unapologetically. Rather than following in Deputy Nazir Ahmad's steps and writing docile narratives of female obedience and conformity, she wrote about sex workers, shy wives, maidservants, and that too in a very explicit and suggestive language that was termed obscene by her detractors. Social hypocrisy that characterized the upper society and especially male gentry was target of her savage criticism.

In her short story 'Till' (The Mole), 'Till' symbolizes eroticism and unrelenting and burning sexual desire. Promiscuity and sexuality are presented with such vividness and frankness as one would find in pulp fiction. The young girl Rani's relentless pursuit for sexual escapades allows her to live a life of free conscious untrammelled by guilt and fear. Female body is described as hot and embodiment of carnal desires. This story exposes the lust and frustration that dominates the society and the hypocrisy that shrouds this libido.

Gainda (Marigold) is written in progressive vein highlighting the phallogocentric class system that suppresses the downtrodden and subaltern. Gainda a low caste domestic help who becomes victim of Hindu caste system pays heavy price for sexual liaison with an upper caste Hindu. Being widowed at a young age, she has to renounce the normal life. The narrator has described her story with such a compassion that humanizes her.

Garhwali describes the horrors of oppressive married life. Based on raw human emotions like sexual desire, obsessiveness and jealousy, the story exposes the hypocrisy that underlies the niceties and politeness of a sham and hypocritical society.

Lihaaf (*The Quilt*) is decidedly the most outrageous of the stories written by Ismat Chughtai. This is a story of forbidden and profane same sex between two female characters. The women indulge in sensual pleasures violating all the social, cultural and religious norms. This story courted trouble and embroiled Chughtai in legal battle and made her a pariah in social and literary circles. Chughtai in her works has focused on the issues that ordinary women face in their everyday life. She focused on the social and cultural issues that silence women and don't allow them a life of respect and dignity. Writing in a candid and frank manner, she exposes the hypocrisy of the male dominant society. With her progressive ideas and approach, she wrote for the poor and masses. Capitalism, religious orthodoxy and exploitation were targets of her critical reformist writing. She was aware of the double standards that were prevalent in the society. Chughtai's stories highlight the heavy odds that oppressed women face in their daily lives. She criticizes society for maltreating women. Her special focus is on women belonging to underprivileged classes. Describing the plight of the middle class Muslim women trapped in religious and social customs on the one hand and patriarchy on the other was her forte.

In *Kaghzi Hai Pairahan*, Chughtai has narrated her childhood experience of living in a patriarchy society. She saw women around her suffer at the hands of patriarchal society. She witnessed domestic violence around her. She also witnessed women experiencing psychological trauma. These observations and experiences had a lasting impact on her. Within her own family, she observed that the men were authoritative and women were weak. She saw gender imbalance at work. She found women disturbed, confused, furious and restless. She realized at an early age that women were not treated with respect. She also observed that women were totally dependent on men for everything. In her writings, she did not sweep her personal experiences and observations under the carpet. Her autobiography is an irrefutable account of her contemporary society in terms of the subjugation and oppression of women.

Colonialism and patriarchy created hierarchical structures which kept women at the lowest step of the ladder. This setup privileged male over female. Women being doubly colonized faced oppression and aggression; and consequently remained subjugated and voiceless in a system that did not give them agency or signification.

Ismat Chughtai explores and investigates pathetic married lives of women in postcolonial societies. Married life for most of the women in the third world becomes drudgery. Women become child breeders and home slaves. 'We were so many siblings that my mother felt nauseated by the very sight of us. One after another we had tumbled to the earth, pummeling and battering her womb. Suffering endlessly from vomiting and labor pains, she looked upon us as objects of her punishment' Chughtai, 2013, p.1). At one occasion when a complication occurs between Ismat and her husband, she is threatened with divorce. The women always remain under masculine authority and oppression. Divorce has been mentioned as a symbol of insecurity which also reflects that women are the property of men and can be treated by men accordingly.

'Perhaps the most important insight KHP contains is about the position of women, particularly Muslim women, in the society of the time. Ismat Chughtai was writing silences, recording the suppressed voice of women from different strata of society. the traditional patriarchal society into which she was born contained women, muted their voices and screened out their agency. Her literary oeuvre, among other things, is a chronicle of restoring the agency if we look at it necessarily as a negotiation with

structures, of subterranean and subversive, rather visible and frontal. (Asaduddin quoted in Chughtai, 2013, p. xviii-xix)

Chughtai also exposes religious hypocrisy in Indian subcontinent. She is very critical of Muslim men who are against educating their daughters. The question of female education in Muslim societies is also the central point of her autobiography. Chughtai had to fight for her right to education. She threatened to convert to Christianity if she was not allowed to get higher education. She forced her parents to allow her to seek admission in a college of her choice. "I'll get down at any situation, enquire about the mission school and reaching there would convert and become a Christian. There I shall have the opportunity to acquire as much education as I wish" (Chughtai, 2016, p. 180). This shows that the women in the third world have to fight for their basic and fundamental right to education. She talks about her existential philosophy where she can decide the course of her life independently. She is ready to take bold step of changing her religion to get education because, for women, education paves the way towards the freedom of body and soul. The restrictions or hurdles in education are not like the way these are in postcolonial societies.

Chughtai in her writings advocated freedom for women including independence of their mind and body. She firmly believed that women had every right to live their lives after their heart and they should not be manipulated by anyone, be it their mothers. 'My mother did not like my activities. She was worried about future – 'These manly pursuits don't fit a woman', she would say. She had little understanding of my pursuits, and could not explain things to me either'. (Chughtai, 2013, p.9). At one point, she argues that "if parents hold the reins of my life then why has God given me a brain? What shall I do with it?" (Chughtai, 2016, p. 174). She expresses similar skepticism when she is forced to choose marriage over education. Repression and psychological violence also become the lot of women when they live in a patriarchal family structure. Ismat is forced to accept her family members' decision regarding her marriage. At this point, she starts thinking about suicide as she states that "suicide seems very easy in adolescence and I too planned it. I could jump of the third floor. I could also jump in one of the salt lakes! The salt would eat my flesh slowly" (Chughtai, 2016, p. 175). The only way to get rid of such oppression is nothing else but suicide.

One of the most important issues for women in postcolonial societies is the fear of parents regarding their daughters' lives while living with their husbands or after getting divorce. When the daughters receive divorce then the parents get worried about their social place in their surroundings. As Ismat's neighbor expresses her concern in this regard and states that "my children will be called the children of divorcee. No one will accept my daughters. They'll say 'like mother like daughter'" (Chughtai, 2016, p. 342). There is no respect for a divorced woman. Divorce is a threat like a hanging sword for women.

The patriarchal attitudes which bedeviled her as a writer emerge in her chapter 'In the name of those brides', a sharp, penetrating and witty account of the famous trial of Chughtai and Saadat Hasan Manto on charges of obscenity for their short stories Lihaaf and Boo respectively. Both were subsequently exonerated, but the stigma and the violent reaction that Lihaaf evoked, continued. On a subsequent trip to Lahore, her publisher Shahid Ahmed Dehlvi introduced her to the writer M. Aslam. She states that " We had barely exchanged greetings when he began to rant about the alleged obscenity in my writings. I was also like a woman possessed. Shahid Sahib tried to restrain me, but in vain. ' And you've used such vulgar words in Gunah Ki Raatein! ' You have even described the details of the sex act merely for the sake of titillation,' I said. My case is different. I am a Man. (Chughtai, 2013, p.29)

For Chughtai, the beauty of women does not lie in outfits. While meeting Zia, her friend and contemporary literary figure, she tells him that “look at me, how I deviate! I had no turquoise sari and it seemed stupid to but a new sari just to be recognized” (Chughtai, 2016, p. 289). She does not follow the traditional ways of clothing and living her routine life. The worth of a person, especially a woman, does not depend on the outfits or jewelry but on knowledge or education. Family reputation is one of the excuses that is used to subjugate and oppress women. Women are forced to stay within the four walls of house, wear veil and conform to the social norms. Even in an educated family Chughtai had to face this. Her mother was against sending her to another city for higher education. Her mother tells her that “we cannot send you to Aligarh. Shaukat is frightfully careless and you are extremely obstinate. You will not listen to her and if something untoward happens, the family would get a bad name” (Chughtai, 2016, p. 180). The women in postcolonial societies who are striving to break the shackles of marginalization and earn the freedom of their mind and body are considered as obstinate or mad.

Chughtai has also focused on the early age marriage of young girls. Young girls become victims of family oppression. They are not allowed to grow up bodily and intellectually to realize their potential. They are not give any freedom of choice. They are married against their will. They are not actually in any position to think or decide about themselves. Chughtai narrates one incident in which one of her neighbors marries off her six-year-old “the idiot got her married when she was only six years old. Now I hear the boy is asking for a motorcycle. He thinks that his father-in-law works for the college so is quite well to do” (Chughtai, 2007, p. 221). Dowry becomes another issue that plays against women. Domestic violence is also a common occurrence. Marriage also becomes a tool of oppression for women. Young girls are married off in order to stop them from acquiring higher education. Chughtai vividly describes her fear of marriage especially when she knows that it could be at the cost of her education “more than my desire for education was the terror of marriage” (Chughtai, 2016, p. 176). She knew that marriage could jeopardize her education. According to her, marriage is like a prison where you can be treated like animals or beaten or tortured without a solid reason. She does not want herself to get involved in such kinds of traditional web of oppression and violence.

In her work, *Kaghazi Hai Pairahan*, Chughtai describes many incidents when she felt helpless. She found herself lonely deserted by her family and friends. “I had no one who cared. Bedding with mattresses also had to be taken. Whole nights I slept less, dreamt more of school and the boarding” (Chughtai, 2007, p. 177). She becomes a victim of loneliness and isolation because she struggled to get her freedom of mind and body being a woman. Furthermore, she also reveals that “there was a strange helplessness that was suffocating me” (Chughtai, 2016, p. 177). She was compelled by her family to behave traditionally. Her parents want her to be an obedient and modest girl who conforms to the society’s norms. They want to prepare for a good wife. However, she remarks that “I’m not interested in being a good homemaker. I wish to study” (Chughtai, 2016, p. 179). Her desire for education shows her fight or battle against the conventional mind-set of her contemporary society. Her mother warns her “I’m not going to send you to school. From tomorrow you will learn to make traditional dishes and Habshi Halwa” (Chughtai, 2016, p. 178). This traditional dishes making pushes the women into the perpetual well of patriarchy and oppression. This kind of domestic life for a woman is nothing but an imprisonment.

Throughout her autobiography, Chughtai describes her battle against patriarchy and other orthodox elements that control and exploit women. One finds a constant struggle

between tradition and modernity. One finds women challenging orthodox interpretations of Islam. "Muslim girls are as such deprived and backward; on top of that this fundamentalist Mullah Ahrarvi is turning into an enemy of our progress" (Chughtai, 2016, p. 226). Furthermore, she expresses her feminist concern in terms of female's education and claims that "the college may certainly be closed but only our dead bodies shall leave the premises. Let us see who has the guts to close this college. We shall handle them" (Chughtai, 2016, p. 226). Chughtai considers economic freedom key to independence of women. Economic dependence keeps women hostage and does not allow them any freedom. As a progressive writer, she always advocated the rights of working class. She believed that women should be independent economically. "I have always highlighted the economic dependence of women. For me, a woman who obeys the men around her because they fulfill her financial needs is not really obedient, she is only clever" (Chughtai, 2016, p. 55). She rejects and goes against the social norms and practices of her contemporary society. She uses some harsh words for orthodox women and asserts that "a wife who hangs on to her husband because he provides her food and shelter is really no better than a prostitute" (Chughtai, 2016, p. 55). Women should be treated as human beings not as puppets in the hands of men. Chughtai also criticizes who accept their fate as given and do not resist against it. She considers this abject submission the worst. She thinks that women who see no active role for themselves cannot be good mothers either. She says "the womb of such a helpless creature shall give birth to human beings who are mentally enslaved and subjugated and shall remain satisfied at being at the mercy of other developed nations" (Chughtai, 2016, p. 55). She wants women to be proactive, aggressive and energetic in their fight against societal oppression. Unless women fight for themselves, they can't get any rights. They will have to challenge the status quo. As she says "till the time the woman of this country remain helpless, weak, and are forced to bear injustice and brutality. We shall continue to suffer from inferiority complexes, both socially and politically" (Chughtai, 2016, pp. 55-6).

Chughtai also highlights the miserable life of the working class. The oppressed people face humiliation in their daily. They are exploited in every possible way. She considers poverty the main reason for the exploitation of the working class. The working class is denied basic human rights and they work in very hostile environment. She expresses sympathies for such classes. She says "there is no more class dependent and unfortunate than house servants; especially in India where poverty and unemployment have turned a large population into slaves and dependent of the rich class" (Chughtai, 2016, p. 46). Chughtai considers inequality that exists between the rich and the poor on the one hand and between genders on the other hand is the main reason of exploitation. "the absence of equality is not to be found only between the rich and the poor. This inequality exists in all its glory between the male and the female" (Chughtai, 2016, p. 53). The author is of the view that gender inequality is the fundamental cause which leads toward the destructive consequences related to depression as well as marginalization. The complex family structures and uncongenial circumstances in homes do not allow the postcolonial women to have a free and comfortable life as they are always under some kind of burden and pressure. Ismat presents the dilemma of her own life and states that "having to bear the concern of eight older brothers and sisters, one is desperate to grow up" (Chughtai, 2016, p. 53). She feels suffocated while living with the elder members of her family who always tried to assert their authority in routine life matters.

Chughtai's work marks a battle between tradition and modernity. Her family members including her mother stood for tradition. She was lone warrior who stood for modernity. Though her parents tried to hold her back, they never succeeded. She always felt that as woman she had a cause to serve and that she wanted to change the society. Her radical

thoughts were at odds with the traditional conservative and orthodox mentality. At one point, she argues that “if parents hold the reins of my life then why has God given me a brain? What shall I do with it?” (Chughtai, 2016, p. 174).

Writing was cathartic for Chughtai. It allowed her to give vent to her pent up passions. Throughout her life remained a staunch supporter of the women rights. She worked for exposing the excesses of gender inequality. Bano (2013) remarks that Chughtai lobbied relentlessly and always strived to put her own voice in her works. She wrote with a great passion and panache and raised her voice against “the tyrannies of her contemporary society” (p. 3). She loved controversy and attacked all the social evils and taboos undaunted.

Anita Desai has aptly summed up Ismat Chughtai’s writings: “One could read her work as an exposure of India traditions, of religious bigotry, of the male hegemony and female illiteracy and dependence—but that would be a limited interpretation for – besides her obvious and instinctive iconoclasm – there was also her intimate involvement with that world, her delight in it – the unruly household with too many children, the squabbles and rivalries amongst the women, the displays of affection and indulgence, and the rich and colorful language, spiced with salty proverbs and aphorisms. Instead of contradicting each other, these elements came together to form such an indivisible – and infinitely rich – whole that one can only exclaim, on reading her work, ‘Oh, human nature! Ah, the human race!’”(quoted in Asaduddin,2013, p.xxi)

Conclusion

The study concludes that all of the nations which were once colonized by the Europeans possess subaltern identity in one way or the other. The literary context of postcolonialism is used as a tool that helps the postcolonial people to have some realization about their post-subordination circumstances. It becomes very difficult for the subaltern to erode the colonialist ideologies even in the postcolonial conditions. The analysis of this study are conveying the fact that women suffer a lot in the postcolonial societies but their situations become worst because of the presence of patriarchal and orthodox family structures. Moreover, the experience of women in the postcolonial nations in terms of their exploitation is quite different as compared to Western women. The reason behind this difference is the presence as well as practice of different social, cultural and political practices. Ismat chughtai’s fiction created an outrage in social and literary circles making her a social outcast and a persona non granta. Her stories represent her anguish at the hypocrisies, vanities, follies of the especially upper class and orthodox religious individuals and groups. She narrates incidents from her personal life and puts them in wider social perspective making a case for the general plight for the oppressed and the dispossessed women. She is very critical of societal and patriarchal customs and norms that deny women agency giving them abject status in the society. She is ruthless in her selection of themes and language. She is bold, provocative and uncompromising. Her satire on the patriarchy and orthodoxy is unrelenting. She is rightly called woman Manto.

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