

“Chotien” Critical and Psychological Perspectives

Dr. Rehana Kausar, Dr. Shaista Hameed Khan, Saba Nazir

Head of Urdu Department, Lahore College for Women University Lahore, Pakistan, Email:

kausar@lcwu.edu.pk

Associate Professor, Department of Urdu Government College University Lahore, Pakistan

Email: dr.shaistahameed@gcw.edu.pk

PhD Research Scholar, Government College University Lahore, Pakistan

Corresponding author: Dr. Rehana Kausar

Abstract

In Ismat's writings, we see a glimpse of an India free from riots, sectarianism and hatred. Through this theme, she gave the message to the people to live in peace. The novel *Uninvited Guest* is the best example of this. Ismat never accepted the partition of the subcontinent wholeheartedly. She was a supporter of the common civilization of India.

Keywords: Ismat chughtai. Indian civilization, Partition, Hate, Phycology

Chotien Critical And Psychological Perspectives:

'Chotien' is Ismat Chughtai's third collection of short stories, published in 1942 by Saki Book Depot. The collection includes stories like 'Bhool Bhaliyan', 'Puncture', 'Safar', 'Bimar', 'Mera Bachcha', and 'Lihaf'. These stories primarily deal with the themes of women, psychology, and the Hindu-Muslim riots of that time. Ismat's stories reflect the society and decaying civilization of her time. She has exposed the social ills and diseases in her stories. She has bravely brought out the social evils and psychological aspects in her stories. The stories discuss religious, moral, cultural, psychological, and sexual attitudes. 'Bhool Bhaliyan' portrays the emotional and psychological aspects of young boys and girls in a middle-class family. 'Puncture' highlights the importance of love and emotions. 'Safar' describes the difficulties faced during a train journey. 'Bimar' deals with the psychology of a sick person and his young wife. 'Lihaf' discusses the sexual theme. The stories have a profound impact on the reader, making them think about the social evils and immoral elements in society. Through these stories, Ismat has bravely exposed the social ills and diseases.

"The author has exposed social evils in her stories. Her stories are thought-provoking and make the reader think about social reforms. The collection 'Chotien' by Ismat Chughtai has been reviewed here. Although 'Chotien' is Ismat's first collection, it lacks the maturity and experience seen in her later works. However, these stories are still significant in terms of plot, characters, and emotional expression. The author's true inclination towards progressivism is evident in these stories. The element of realism is also present. This collection marks a milestone in Ismat's intellectual and artistic development. In the story 'Bhool Bhaliyan', Ismat Chughtai discusses the exploitation of women and war. The scene shifts to a few years ago, where Salo, the youngest child, is being stubborn and refusing to listen to his sisters. He constantly bothers Refo Baji, who sometimes scolds him. One day, Salo asks Refo Baji to sew a button on his shirt, but she refuses. Salo becomes stubborn, and Chachi has to intervene. While sewing, the needle pricks Refo Baji's finger, causing chaos in the house. Everyone starts crying, and Refo Baji feels guilty. Salo's father orders Refo Baji to massage Salo with oil, which she silently accepts. Salo then reveals that the needle was still in his shirt, making Refo Baji angry, but she controls her emotions.

Salo's mischief continued even during exam days. He would often cling to Refo Baji and refuse to let go. After exams, Refo Baji returned home, and Salo fell ill with a high fever. One night, Salo asked for water, and Refo Baji had to get it for him. Salo rested his head on Refo Baji's lap, and she felt her heart racing. Two years later, Refo Baji attended Rabea's wedding, where Salo had grown into a young man. He would stare at her with a mischievous gaze, making her uncomfortable. She scolded him, telling him to avoid her, as people might blame her. Salo became distant, and Refo Baji missed the old Salo. When Chachi asked Refo Baji about the change, she feigned indifference. However, Salo complained that Refo Baji had scolded him. Eventually, they made up, and Salo returned to his old self. Later, Salo visited with children, causing chaos, and Refo Baji revealed that she had adopted a child from an orphanage. Salo asked if the child's father had died, and Refo Baji hugged the child, saying, 'Will you kill your father?' Salo's eyes sparkled with mischief again. The story's plot is engaging, and the

author has skillfully presented the final scene first, followed by the main story, exploring the psychology of women and the challenges they face.

"Salo, the youngest sibling and the apple of everyone's eye, has become spoiled due to excessive pampering. Now, Refo Baji, his cousin, also has to tolerate his misbehaviour, which she doesn't want to do. The story's plot has a clear element of interest, and the events are presented in a way that grabs the reader's attention. The author has skillfully woven the narrative to keep the reader engaged.

The short story 'Bhool Bhaliyan' features excellent dialogue writing. The use of short sentences makes it easy for the reader to follow. The conversations are presented in a way that reveals the characters' emotions. This is a hallmark of a good writer, who can paint a vivid picture with their words. For example, when Refo Baji scolds Salo, their conversation goes like this:

'What's wrong with you, Salo?'

'Nothing.'

'You know what people say.'

'What do I care? People...'

'Which people? Tell me, who are they? They must be our well-wishers.'

Salo's face turned red. As the only son of his parents, he was pampered by everyone, which made him stubborn. He liked Refo Baji and would often tease her, showing off and threatening her, saying, 'When my must-ache grows, you'll see my true authority.'"

"Rafeea is the main character of the story, who is actually telling her own story. She is staying at her uncle's house due to exams, but her uncle's son, Salo, teases her and she is worried about his behaviour. However, when she scolds him, she becomes anxious. She is caught in a strange conflict due to Salo's actions. Mano is a small child who Rafeea initially claims to have adopted from an orphanage. Later, when Salo asks about Mano's father and Mano points a toy gun at him, Rafeea stops him, saying, 'Will you kill your father?' The story 'Bhool Bhaliyan' primarily deals with the exploitation of women, which is evident in the last few lines when Salo asks about the child: 'What happened to him?' Rafeea replies, 'The poor child died, his father perhaps died of grief.' Ismat Chughtai's stories often focus on Indian households and the psychological struggles of women from that class. She adopted this theme with such courage and boldness that it became her identity. About this, Patras Bukhari writes..."

"Considering the gender, Ismat Chughtai has a similar status in Urdu literature as George Eliot had in English literature at one time. It's as if literature is a tennis tournament where men and women have separate matches. In other words, Ismat Chughtai's work is considered a benchmark for women's writing in Urdu literature, just as George Eliot's work is regarded in English literature."(1)

"This is a story from when I was young. My mother left me with her sister, Begum Jan, for a few days because she was going to Agra. Begum Jan's poor parents had married her off to an old eunuch who had young students staying with him, and they would ignore Begum Jan. She was deeply depressed and had no interest in anything. Rabbo, a young servant, took care of her and massaged her with a special oil, which made her body healthy again. The other servants were jealous of Rabbo's affection towards Begum Jan. Begum Jan was beautiful, but she had a skin condition that doctors couldn't understand. When my mother left me with Begum Jan, I was very young. One night, I woke up to see the blanket moving, and I was scared. But when Begum Jan woke up, I went back to sleep. One day, Rabbo went to meet her son, and Begum Jan was sad all day. I told her I could keep her company, and she didn't refuse. The next day, Rabbo didn't come back, and I kept Begum Jan company. She held my hand and talked to me, and then she lay down with me and started caressing me. I was scared, but fortunately, Rabbo came back that night. The next day, Rabbo and Begum Jan had a fight, and I was even more scared. Suddenly, Begum Jan remembered me and asked me to make tea. When I brought her tea, the room was filled with a nice smell, and Begum Jan started loving me again. I kept saying I wanted to go home, and when I refused to stay, Begum Jan got angry and threw away her necklace. I ran away, and when she came to her senses, Rabbo took care of her. That night, when I woke up.

I saw the blanket moving, and strange shapes were forming on the wall. I hid under the blanket. The events in the story are presented in a sequence, and the story moves forward in a coherent manner. The plot is strong, and the most important character is Begum Jan, whose poor parents married her off to a eunuch, and she spent her life in disappointment and despair. She appears as a significant and pitiful character in the story. Commenting on her character, Mujnoon Gorakhpuri wrote..."

"In the story 'Lihaf' (The Quilt), it is shown how a young and respectable woman, when tied to a eunuch, spends her life."(2)

Ismat Chughtai's stories do not have much imagination and fantasy. She writes about the events happening around her. The center of her stories is mostly women. That's why she has interpreted women's psychology in her stories. "Lihaf" is also an analysis of the psychology of a woman who has been left alone in life. This story is about a woman who, due to her husband's impotence, chooses to be with another woman. Ismat has used the art of psychological analysis to open up this knot, which often turns into mental illnesses. When there is a deep gap between a man and a woman, sexual issues become a cause of mental distress. In this story, Ismat has explained the philosophy of sex, that is, what can be the condition of a young woman without a man. In the story, it is said: "The quilt made new shapes on every turn and cast a shadow on the wall, but none of the shadows were enough to keep her alive, yet she lived again and lived well." Ismat Chughtai has extraordinary power over language and expression, which is evident in her writings. Her style is simple, beautiful, and exactly like everyday life. She is well aware of the natural language of her characters. She writes keeping in mind the environment, events, and language. That's why her style is very important in her stories. In the story "Lihaf", she has adopted a simple style and spoken in a way that the reader immediately understands the meaning: "Rabbo caught her as she fell. Seeing her, her dry body started to flourish. Her cheeks became rosy, and her beauty blossomed. With a strange and wonderful oil massage, a glimpse of life came into Begum Jan." Ismat has taken the language and phrases from the common class for her creative expression. Her style of expression or style has become a reliable tradition of Urdu fiction. The story is about a young girl who goes out for a cycle ride with her friend Edna but gets left behind. When her cycle breaks down, a young man comes and helps her, and they start talking. The girl is initially annoyed by his teasing but later finds him to be a straightforward and honest person.

The story 'Puncture' has a strong plot and events that move forward in a sequence. The author has made a lot of effort to create interest in the story, and she has succeeded. The story has the power to attract the reader. The author has done beautiful dialogue writing in the story. She has created interest in the story with short and simple sentences. A romantic atmosphere has been created at the end of the story. The author has expressed her views through simple sentences, that is, she has shown that women can live in society with the same respect as men. The protagonist of the story, a university student, is a brave and courageous girl who does not bow down to the young man until the end. Through this character, Ismat has made it clear that women are just as respectable in society as men. According to Ismat, men and women should have equal status. The protagonist of the story 'Puncture' is the best example of this. The young man enters the story when the protagonist's cycle tire is punctured. Instead of helping her, he is making fun of her. He is an arrogant young man who thinks that men have a higher status in society than women. Therefore, men never express love, but rather, it is their right that women should bow down to them and worship them. But in the end, he becomes helpless and expresses his love. Edna is the protagonist's friend, and it is at her suggestion that the two friends go out for a cycle ride.

Edna's character does not appear much in the story, but she is still an important character because it was at her suggestion that the protagonist went out for a cycle ride and met the young man. The story moves forward from there. The protagonist gets engaged to Manzoor. When the young man reads the news of their engagement in the newspaper, he returns. Manzoor is a good young man who wants to marry the protagonist, and he has a good job. Through this story, Ismat Chughtai has shown how respectable and beautiful the role of a woman is in society. Women have the right to equal respect and reward as men. Ismat is a progressive short story writer, and the subject of most of her stories is women and the respect and greatness of women in society. She has expressed this in many places. At one point, she writes:

"She writes: "Man is ready to worship woman and make her a goddess. He can give her love, give her respect, but cannot give her equal status."(3)

"The short story "Puncture" is a romantic story in which I (the narrator) and the young man meet by chance. Both of them do not express love only because of their ego. The young man thinks that men cannot bow down, otherwise, his ego will be hurt. So he does not express love. But in the end, he loses and expresses love and

proposes marriage, which the narrator accepts. This story also teaches us that there should be no ego in love, otherwise, there is no option but separation. Ismat Chughtai's writing shows rebellion, that is, the narrator knows that the young man loves her, but she cannot accept it because of her ego. So she also becomes rebellious and proves that women can be as proud as men. In the story, it is mentioned that "I wore Manzoor's ring... I had adopted a kind of stubbornness. Quickly started preparations. Decided to go to Kashmir soon. In Manzoor's absence, I would get possessed. The heart would rebel... and it would feel like if we didn't get married soon, I would go crazy. Sometimes, to punish myself for these rebellious thoughts, I would shower excessive affection on Manzoor, but who knows, all that expression and attachment was said with someone else in mind." Ismat had extraordinary power over language and expression. She used the natural language of her characters in her stories. According to the environment, place, and events, she made the characters speak in a way that suited their class, which is present in her story "Puncture". This story is romantic, so the author has completed the romantic sentences with great skill, which is a testament to her artistic skill and maturity.

The story is about a girl's journey and the events she experiences during her travel. The author has criticised the poor railway system and described the conversations of different people and the conditions of third-class passengers. The main character is the girl who is the narrator, and the author has discussed her thoughts and feelings in detail. She talks about the problems she faces during her journey and expresses her emotions, showing that she is an educated girl. When she talks to the public leader, she shows enthusiasm and says, "India cannot be independent without the help of women. Women should never be underestimated." There are also several supporting characters, including a man and a woman who sleeps continuously during the journey, a crowd of boys, and the leader who thinks that women should fight for their rights and participate in the country's development. The author has paid full attention to scene-setting in the story, describing various events and experiences in a way that makes the reader feel like they are in the railway carriage.

The author's style in the story is simple, yet engaging. The story 'Bimar' (The Sick Man) is about a man who is weakened by illness and has become a shadow of his former self. He is so frail that no one fears him, and his neighbour often enters his home and flirts with his young wife. The wife seems to have lost interest in her husband and is instead drawn to the neighbour. The sick man is aware of the situation, but his attempts to assert himself are met with annoyance by his wife. He remembers when he was young and healthy, and people would look up to him, but now everyone treats him with disdain. Even his own uncle calls him 'bhai' (brother) in a mocking tone. The sick man is bitter and resentful towards everyone, including his wife, who seems to have moved on from him.

The story 'Bimar' (The Sick Man) is a psychological portrayal of a man who is suffering from illness and is weakened by the behaviour of those around him. The author, Ismat, has prioritised the psychological aspect of the story, which is why the plot is not strong and the element of interest is lacking. The story revolves around the sick man's observations and actions, and his wife's negative character is depicted. She, who had promised to take care of her husband in his youth, now avoids him and talks to the neighbour in a flirtatious manner, knowing that her husband dislikes it. The wife's behaviour is unbearable for the husband, who is already helpless due to his illness. The author has vividly described the sick man's pain and suffering, and how the society's wrong behaviour towards him adds to his misery.

The author, Ismat Chughtai, has vividly described the sick man's psychological state in the story 'Bimar' (The Sick Man). The man's helplessness and frustration are evident in his thoughts, where he imagines cutting off his wife's nose and carving marks on her face. The author has skillfully portrayed the man's mental weakness and his feelings of anger and resentment towards his wife and the people who come to visit him with false sympathies. The story is written in simple language, reflecting the everyday conversations of ordinary people, making it easy for the reader to understand. The author's use of simple words and phrases effectively conveys the emotions and feelings of the characters.

The story revolves around a young man who dreams all the time, whether he is awake or asleep. He imagines himself in various scenarios, sometimes as a handsome young man admired by a beautiful woman, or as a brave hero saving a girl's life. However, in reality, he is an unemployed young man with premature balding. He finds solace in his dreams, where he can escape the mundanity of his life. He is disinterested in the women his mother suggests for marriage and instead fantasises about beautiful women he sees in his dreams. People think he has a mental illness, but he can't help but get lost in his own world of imagination.

The story 'Uske Khwab' (His Dreams) is a psychological portrayal of a young man's excessive daydreaming and imagination. The events in the story are not sequential, but rather a reflection of the protagonist's thoughts and

desires. He imagines himself with beautiful women, including a sadhu's daughter, a wealthy girl, and a young woman who expresses her love for him. The story revolves around the protagonist's loneliness and sexual desires, which he fulfils through his dreams. The protagonist is the main character, a young private school teacher who is unhappy with the girls his mother suggests for marriage. He wants to marry a beautiful and wealthy girl, despite not being handsome himself and having premature balding. The story is a reflection of the protagonist's psychology and emotions, showcasing his inner world and desires. The author, Ismat Chughtai, has skillfully portrayed the protagonist's thoughts and feelings, making this a masterpiece of psychological storytelling. The story showcases the protagonist's escape from reality into a world of imagination, where he fulfils his desires and fantasies. The author, Ismat Chughtai, has skillfully portrayed the protagonist's thoughts and feelings, highlighting his sensitivity and emotional depth. The story also touches on the theme of Hindu-Muslim unity, suggesting that Indians are sensitive people who can be easily provoked. The author mentions an incident where a woman, Barjo, wakes up from a terrifying dream and sees a frightening shadow in her room, highlighting the emotional vulnerability of individuals. The story is a masterpiece of psychological storytelling, showcasing the protagonist's inner world and desires, and the author's skilful use of language and narrative techniques.

The story takes a turn when a young Muslim man seeks refuge in Barjo's room, escaping a Hindu mob. Barjo, despite initial reservations, hides him and protects him from the mob. The young man's wounds are tended to, and he is given a disguise to escape. The story's plot is beautifully woven, revolving around a single character who is wounded and sought after by both Barjo, who wants to save him, and the mob outside, who want to kill him. The author has skillfully crafted the narrative, making it easy for the reader to follow.

The story highlights the themes of fear, protection, and disguise. Barjo's initial fear gives way to courage as she protects the young man, while the mob outside is driven by fear and a desire to harm. The story also explores the idea of disguise, as the young man is given a new identity to escape.

Overall, the story is a powerful exploration of human emotions and behaviour in times of crisis. The author's use of language and narrative techniques creates a vivid and immersive reading experience."

The author has written a simple and easy-to-understand dialogue between Barjo and the young man. The language is straightforward, and the short sentences make it easy for the reader to follow. Ismat Chughtai has bravely addressed the topic of Hindu-Muslim riots in this story. She believed in peace, harmony, and equality in society. At the beginning of the story, she comments on the Hindu-Muslim riots, saying: 'We Indians are such sensitive people that we can be provoked by anything.' She describes how a small incident can lead to violence and riots. Ismat Chughtai's writings suggest that she dreamed of an India where there would be no riots, hatred, or sectarianism. She writes in Rahab:

"The flood of riots came with its intensity and passed, but left behind a trail of living dead and smouldering ruins. The country was not only divided into two parts, but also the bodies and lands were torn apart. The scales of justice were shattered, and the flags of humanity were torn apart."(4)

"Ismat's words reveal how deeply she was affected by the riots during the partition. A writer or poet is a sensitive member of society, and they are quickly disturbed by the events and circumstances around them. But the event of migration was a great tragedy that shook an era. Ismat's stories give us a sense of hope for a new life. In the story, the character of the young man is portrayed as clever and understanding. He quickly realises that Barjo is cowardly and presents a scenario of his own murder, which frightens Barjo and makes her willing to help him.

The second important character is Barjo, who is a Hindu girl but has humanity in her heart and helps the young man. The story "Sas" describes the situation of a middle-class family. The mother-in-law is frustrated with her daughter-in-law's behaviour, and the daughter-in-law's childish actions annoy her. The whole day, the mother-in-law scolds her, but the shameless daughter-in-law doesn't care and laughs instead. This makes the mother-in-law even angrier, and she hits her with a shoe. Later, the son, Asghar, comes home and sees his mother's behaviour. He takes his wife inside, and the mother-in-law is left alone, bothered by flies in the heat.

The story's plot is strong, and there is no unnecessary detail. The story is presented in simple language from start to finish, making it easy for the reader to understand. The descriptive scenes in the story "Sas" are beautifully portrayed, such as the morning scene in the summer heat.

It used to be that six or seven suns would enter the house, trying to bring heat and light. The author has beautifully described the summer heat and the scenes of the story. The dialogue between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is also noteworthy, such as:

"I told you to take care of the parrot, why did it die?' She replied, 'No, we will call it back, you old woman, you have become like coal.' If this is how it is, God knows what will happen next."

The above stories reveal Ismat Chughtai's style, character development, and narrative technique. Various critics have also explained Ismat Chughtai's unique style. Her character development has created a situation where her characters seem different from those of other writers. The characters in her stories have a basic quality that is unique to her style. Ismat Chughtai's unparalleled style has contributed to the popularity and greatness of her stories. She used simple language that is spoken by the common people. Ismat Chughtai's style is unique and has contributed to the greatness of her stories. She has used simple language that is spoken by the common people. Dr. M. Sultana Bukhsh writes about her style:

"Ismat not only in every story but also in every sentence of the same story, in different parts and sometimes even in just two or four words, creates a new feeling, a new tone, a new sense of humour, and a unique flavour that fills the reader with a sense of freshness and novelty. This is such that none of her sentences feel stale, predictable, dull, or lacking in any way."(5)

"Ismat's writings give us a glimpse of an India free from riots, sectarianism, and hatred. Through this topic, she conveyed the message of living in peace. The story "Ben Belaia Mahman" is its best example. Ismat never accepted the partition of the subcontinent from the heart. She was a supporter of India's shared civilization. Ismat Chughtai was an important member of the Progressive Movement. She bravely and openly wrote about psychology, sex, and social issues in her writings. Her writings also gave courage to many women story writers to write more. Qurratulain Haider writes about Ismat:

"Ismat Chughtai established a new example of courage and boldness in Urdu novels and stories. Her fiery writings left behind those writers who had a romantic style and spoke in clichéd words. In literature, her place was taken by rebellious social realism."(6)

According To Patras Bukhari

Ismat's personality is a source of pride for Urdu literature. She has made inroads into some old-fashioned thoughts that were previously hidden from sight, as long as they were prevalent, many things were invisible to the eyes."(7).

References:

1. Professor Qamar Rais, "New Story: Issues and Trends" (Urdu), Urdu Academy, Delhi, p. 15, 1992.
2. Dr. Jameel Akhtar, "Ismat Chughtai: A Critical Evaluation" (Urdu), International Urdu Foundation, New Delhi, p. 293, 2001.
3. Dr. M. Sultana Bukhsh, "Ismat Chughtai: Personality and Art" (Urdu), Word Vision Publishers, Islamabad, p. 222, December 1992.
4. Professor Qamar Rais, "New Story: Issues and Trends" (Urdu), Urdu Academy, Delhi, p. 31, 1992.
5. Dr. M. Sultana Bukhsh, "Ismat Chughtai: Personality and Art" (Urdu), Word Vision Publishers, Islamabad, p. 247, December 1992.
6. Professor Qamar Rais, "New Story: Issues and Trends" (Urdu), Urdu Academy, Delhi, p. 39, 1992.
7. Ismat Chughtai - A Husband's Sake (Short Stories), Nafees Printers, Pattiala Ground, Lahore, p. 5, 1992.