



Urdu Studies

An international, peer-reviewed,
bilingual research journal
ISSN: 2583-8784 (Online)
Vol. 4 | Issue 1 | Year 2024
Pages: 155-168

Gendered-Trajectories, Dissident-Dreams: Re-reading “Lihāf” and *Kāghazī hai Pairahan* in the Postcolonial Context

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Abstract. Prima facie, the feminist resistance is to be seen in all the disciplines and discourses today, yet a deeper analysis unfolds layers of antithesis within it, whatsoever. The tussle between the Oriental and the Occidental ideological stands affect the feminist issues invariably, and more so in the Third World countries. This article demonstrates the grit of an unconventional Muslim female voice of Indian subcontinent- Ismat Chughtai (1911-91) as recorded in her autobiography, *A Life in Words: Memoirs* (2013), a translated work to English, originally written in Urdu under the title *Kāghazī hai Pairahan* (1988) and magnum opus “Lihāf” (1942). Along with drawing parallels on Spivak’s and Connell’s ideas of “subaltern” and “hegemonic masculinity” respectively, this research attempts to analyze and contextualize the feminist issues in the Third World *vis-à-vis* Indian sub-continent.

Keywords. Homoeroticism, hegemonic masculinity, emphasized femininity, patriarchy, resistance, subaltern

Introduction

Decidedly, the socio-political and the religio-cultural factors of the Third World, particularly the South Asian countries are not at par with the Western World, and thus mingling both is a farcical mismatch. The logistics of the Western World to carry out the Third World feminist issues is not straightforward, but involve layers of twists and turns both culturally and contextually. Thus, handling it homogeneously is neither feasible nor desirable. Yet an intrusion of the Western Feminism that tends to offer one-

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Included in UGC-CARE List since October 2021

Published on August 11, 2024

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dimensional treatment and homogenizes itself as a panacea for all the challenges faced by the women in the Third World, doubly at periphery, ought to be questioned. The unconsolidated and uncomprehensive approach of the Western World contextually seems more of a delusion. While “Lihāf”² (1942) by Ismat Chughtai (1911-1991) is divergent of what has been labelled as “hegemonic masculinity,” her *Kāghazī hai Pairahan*³ (1988) challenges the concept of “emphasized femininity”. Chughtai’s writing is an iconoclastic one. One that dismisses the age-old cruel machismo of imposing congruent gender roles.

Whereas the *esprit de corps* of feminism cannot be questioned in general, the linear approach and homogenous claim of the Western feminism- to have incorporated the ever-changing dimensions and challenges into it, and the claim to act as a singular panacea, is a farce. The feminist eurocentrism of the West does not fit in the format of the Third World and thereby faces innumerable challenges. The issues faced by the Western women are poles apart from that of the non-western women, especially those in the South Asian countries. This led to an urgent need to have an alternative category that doesn’t let the pressing issues of the Third World women suffocate, rather voice it appropriately. What led to this alternative is partly the politics, and partly the failure of Western feminism to comprehend the gist properly. An attempt to theorize the Third World feminist issues become political when it is embedded with the age-old Eurocentric perspectives. It can be addressed as a failure if linear parameters of the Western world are made the basis to measure it.

Though on surface level, it sounds one and the same thing but the more

² Quilt; the story has been translated as “The Quilt” by several translators

³ This expression is borrowed from a well-known couplet of Mirza Ghalib:

Naqsh fariyādī hai kis kī shoḳhi-e-tahrīr kā

Kāghazī hai pairahan har paikar-e-tasvīr kā

Against whose mischievous writing is the impression of complainant?

Made of paper is the attire of the countenance of every image!

Quoted from – *Ghair Mutdavi Kalam-e-Ghalib* (P. 38) Author: Jamal Abdul Wahid Publication: Ghalib Academy Basti Hazrat Nizamuddin, New Delhi-13 (2016). In Iranian culture, it symbolizes a fragile covering, petitioner's or supplicant's dress, the paper cloth that the plaintiffs and petitioners used to wear before the emperor in ancient times in Iran. It is symptomatic of humility, humbleness, weakness and helplessness of the petitioners. Also, it represents the lamentation and cries of the oppressed. The plaintiff would go to the ruler in a paper robe, and during the day such as lighting a torch or hanging a blood-stained cloth on a bamboo pole etc. which basically underlines the justice system and jurisprudence of the time. The idea has been transplanted into the Urdu literary tradition from Persian monarchical culture. In Chughtai’s case, the rebellion seems to be directed towards God, and thus the metaphor of the paper clothing is borrowed from Ghalib’s *ghazal* in an extension to the socio-cultural set up of the patriarchal society.

one digs deeper, the more problematic layers of feminist issues one finds that varies from one social system to the other based on culture, race, religion and region, social and economic conditions etc. Within America itself, for instance, the Afro-American women experience very different feminist challenges. Similarly, a colored Dalit woman in Indian context seemingly shares similar feminist issue theoretically, but the solution differs in practical. The approaches of liberal feminism in the Indian context are poles apart from that of the Western context. Similarly, Marxist and Radical feminism serve differently in different contexts. Islamic feminism in the Third World has different connotations for women of the Western Muslim world. Such disparities pose a challenge to Western feminism and proves that it cannot become serviceable across the globe in a monolithic Western-run feminist discourse.

From the liberal perspective and for the ethnographic treatment of it, Western feminism came under attack for (mis)handling and (mis)presenting Third World feminist issues, owing to cultural insensitivity partly, and for eurocentrism perspectives largely. In conjunction with Spivak's groundbreaking addressing of the term "subaltern," Third World feminist contentions can be better understood. Spivak's take-away from Gramsci's prescient implications of the term "subaltern," if read in collaboration with Third World ground realities, help comprehend the concept better. Spivak's contentions being misunderstood and misrepresented is crystal-clear when she argues in an interview:

Subaltern is not just a classy word for "oppressed", for [the] other, for somebody who's not getting a piece of the pie ... In post-colonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern — a space of difference. Now, who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern... Many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous. I mean, just by being a discriminated-against minority on the university campus; they don't need the word 'Subaltern'. They should see what the mechanics of the discrimination are. They're within the hegemonic discourse, wanting a piece of the pie, and not being allowed, so let them speak, use the hegemonic discourse. They should not call themselves subaltern⁴ (Spivak 34).

Down the line, Gramsci's and Spivak's prescient use of the term 'subaltern' holds true in the Third World social and political contexts and *vis-*

⁴ Spivak GC (1992). "Interview with Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa" (Interviewer Leon de Kock). *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*.

à-vis Indian sub-continent. The apparent objective reading of the Western feminists to investigate and (mis)present the Third World feminist issues, in the absence of coming face-to-face with the ground realities ranging from the domestic, political, social, educational, economical and other non-western marginalization, is quite contentious. The claim of the Western feminists to have read and addressed the Third World feminist issues in an objective manner, is in fact a subjective one; owing to their colonial hegemonic and Eurocentric political policy.

To take a step further from Butler's observation that "gender is a social construct," (Butler 273) Connell's concept of masculinity is constructed by umpteen layers of masculinities and femininities onto one another. Within the umbrella term of masculine also, there is a sub-category of "minority men," who defy the established sexual heteronormativity of the social set-up, along with different categories of masculinities as subordinated ones. Connell writes, "The terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' point beyond categorical sex difference to the ways men differ among themselves, and women differ among themselves, in matter of gender" (Connell 69). Connell is of the view that 'hegemonic masculinity' is taken to be the standard parameter to measure masculinity; one that is legitimized by society. Potential patriarchal elements have been instilled into the psychology of men largely to serve colonial interest in particular, and Western capitalist agendas in general. In contrast, women have been relegated to be the custodians of culture, homemakers, and agencies of progeny. Nonetheless, the last few decades have served sharply to redefine gender politics by challenging assigned gendered roles as masculine and feminine. Quite incisively, Connell reflects that within the purview of masculinity, there are sub-categories with different sexual orientations like the homosexuals, bisexuals etc. and presumably, hegemonic masculinity serves as master masculinity in a gendered hegemonic set-up. Whereas the ideal woman would be the one who is incongruent with the 'fallen woman', and comes at par with the 'emphasized femininity.'

In this backdrop arguably, "The Quilt" can be read under Connell's idea of 'hegemonic masculinity' where Nawab goes defiant of 'hegemonic masculinity' narrative by satiating his sexual perversion via pedophilia. While the cathartic retaliation in *KHP* establishes Chughtai's life account subversive of what is accepted as 'emphasized femininity' in society.

Chughtai: An Infant Terrible

"I think the first word articulated by me after birth was, why?"

(Chughtai *A Life* 214)

Since ages, women have insidiously and surreptitiously been made to agree and accept themselves as the "Second Sex" (Beauvoir 49) and this continued for centuries until certain feminist voices brought awareness in the recent past, and one such voice is that of Ismat Chughtai. *KHP* is her Re-reading "*Lihāf*" and *Kāghazī hai Pairahan*

memoir that documents her life as a fine account of her uncompromising attitude. It represents her percepts in general, and in particular it encourages other subjugated women to voice against the atrocities by writing. She is, like Cixous, a role model, who would want women to write.

And why don't you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it. I know why you haven't written. (And why I didn't write before the age of twenty-seven.) Because writing is at once too high, too great for you, it's reserved for the great-that is for "great men;" and it's "silly" (Cixous 76).

In *KHP* readers come face to face with the experiences of the writer, encountering with bold assertions irrespective of patriarchal and social pressure. Chughtai delimits herself from the imposed social norms, and attempts to voice the subaltern status of women. Chughtai is reminisced as a writer whose pen has constantly been engaged in assigning an ethnographic delineation to Muslim female voices.

The naivety with which the child narrator of "The Quilt" portrayed the gravity of a subject that was a taboo – unspoken and undiscussed – a homoerotic relationship, underscore the actual naivety and uncompromising attitude of Chughtai herself. After the trail, Chughtai admits that she was unaware of "this thing" (lesbianism). Chughtai thought it to have existed since girls have no options to go to prostitutes. "I thought that men always went to prostitutes, but because girls can't go to prostitutes, they do this" (Chughtai, 12).

Literature Review

Much has been said and written about "The Quilt" but to choose its latest recast *Lihāf* (2019) by Rahat Kazmi, would be presumably an appropriate addition to the already existing literary research. Cinema is an animated form of literature; one that imparts life to words on paper. The journey from paper to screen solely depends on the cinematic imagination and the artistic delineation, to make it a timeless oeuvre d'art. A life-like approach in the latest casting of *Lihāf*, whether it is through the choice of actors or the cinematography, adds an extra layer of meaning on the much-discussed subject-matter of homoeroticism. Sonal Sehgal's (Begum Jan) sarcastic retaliation prompted by the her long sexually-suppressed desire, bursts out when Nawab's sister visits them.

Autobiographical writing, like the diary writing, begun to be practiced in India in the 19th century. *Aamar Jiban* is credited to be the ever first autobiography written by a female writer as early as in 1876 by Rassundari Devi. Albeit, phenomenal writing like the one *Babaurnama* is often taken to be autobiographical, but it is more of a memoir. Thus, autobiography is altogether said to be a foreign idea that gets assimilated into Indian context. With the passage of time, Indian society being a male dominated one, this form of writing remained under the domination of male writers for a very

long time-span. Women were subjugated under the social taboos and male domination, and in the Muslim culture it was practiced under the religious grab of *pardā* system, and thus woman were not accentuated to this genre. A few scholarly women's writing took the form of diaries. Chughtai also came across the same experiences of being questioned on gender basis for being a writer. Her initial publications came under the pseudonyms of her elder brother, Azim Beg Chughtai, who was a well-established writer by that time. The publisher got both amused and amazed simultaneously; and more than that he was confused, as to why Azim Chughtai had changed his name to Ismat Chughtai? It could only be later revealed that Chughtai was a feminist voice and that the quality of her writing, the in-depth and substantiality of her themes, the bold assertion and her uncompromising approach to unravel the hypocrisy of socio-cultural set up of society, led her to be an iconoclastic writer.

Women were not supposed to share their personal life in the nineteenth century, because of *pardā* and related issues regarding their demeanor. The sharing of 'I' or 'my' with the world was not given any space. The reflection of their experiences or the personal discussion in terms of sharing their personal life was taboo. They were expected to confine themselves within the premises of social and cultural responsibilities as in the form of the custodian of cultural. It was only in the twentieth century that women entered the domain of autobiographical writing. Gandhi's and Nehru's autobiographies were taken as models in the male domain, albeit such phenomenal models were exiguous in the female domain. One of the basic constrains was the implicit fear of exposing the 'self' truthfully, and this prevented women going public about their lives.

***KHP*. Challenging Age-old Patriarchal Norms**

Chughtai is recognized primarily just for her much-talked- about "The Quilt" despite the fact that many more writings encapsulate her genius. *KHP* is an autobiographical document where the readers are taken aback by the sense and evolving of it, and what all went into the making of an author like Chughtai. *KHP* is rich with imagery, vivid style, a rare sense of humor and her critical approach to look at herself. All assembles in this autobiographical account that captures an era which is gone forever, nevertheless it provides a platform for the psychic push to all the subverted female voices in general and the Muslim female voices in particular.

At the base of this qualitative autobiography are accounts of the ups and downs, rebellion, and for that matter, how one pays to be able to make one's own choice. Chughtai demanded her right to education by ferociously threatening to convert to Christianity if denied, owing to a fascination towards books since her childhood. She got her school education at Aligarh and completed her graduation from Lucknow and recorded herself as being one of the first few Muslim girl to receive a graduation degree at least in the

region she lived (Chughtai, *A Life* 94).

The rebellious mode which enabled her achieve is visible, right from her childhood. Narrating about the incident of how she was reprimanded by her friend Sushi's grandmother for taking the "cute" Bhagwanji in her lap and eventually clasping it to her breast out of her uncontrollable impulse, she records that she was dragged and thrown out of the door like a "dead lizard" as if she had committed a perversion (Chughtai *A Life* 7). An account indicating Chughtai's stubborn, yet sensitive attitude is to be seen when she as a child attending *majlis*⁵ during which the story of Ali Asghar, being shot in the throat by an arrow is narrated. At once she put questions, "Why did he shoot the arrow? He could have shot him in the arm, why in the throat, poor baby?" (Chughtai *A Life* 3)

Her persistent questioning put her mother and siblings to huge embarrassment. The attendants did not pay attention to her question, taking her to be a small yet stubborn child. The little innocent, totally unaware of the religious surroundings kept on harping on the same sting but to no answer. Later, back at home, she constantly asked the same question but eventually when she was reprimanded by her mother, she had to make peace with it. But again, while at her bed, she asked Shekhani Bua the same question.

This forthright nature is visible in Chughtai's writings as well; so much so that many of her short stories are ingrained with obscenity or rebellion against the religious norms. Chughtai is one voice that shunned the gender-bias as a child and challenged the patriarchal norms. She dressed like a boy and gave a wide berth to her femininity, largely because of the inferior treatments she would be meted out to for being a woman. Compromising was always looked down by her even as a kid and patience would be seen as cowardice by her. She would look down all the feminine compromises as duplicity, and hiding her blemishes was a kind of deception for Chughtai. In chapter one, "Dust of the Caravan" Chughtai shares her choice for not wearing the make-up after being impressed by Russian girls who do not prefer to put up cosmetics, would wear simple clothes; just like the workmen (Chughtai *A Life* 10).

Therefore, it is observed that Chughtai has had an impression of the Russian friend she met with, which had a long-lasting impression upon her personality. Her genuine looks, in terms of not putting on cosmetics, so as to hide her real appearance becomes the force that led her to be a fierce and uncompromising writer, exposing the socio-cultural realities of her times. She would take upon issues candidly, without merging them with duplicity. Her frankness at choosing the themes prevailing in contemporary time sets her apart from the rest of her contemporaries. Narrating the story of Mangu,

⁵ A *majlis* is a meeting, a session or a gathering. In reference to Karbala tragedy, it means a gathering to mourn Hussain and his companion's martyrdom.

a close friend, Chughtai writes that she was married at a tender age and for not being able to beget the male child, she was tortured by her parent's in-law, to the extent that her mother-in-law forces her husband to divorce her. Chughtai's father, concerned about the plight of women, takes up the issue and threatens Mangu's husband with legal action if he divorces her. Later, Mangu played a clever game, pretending she was possessed by a spirit. The exorcists exposed the fact that it was Mangu's mother-in-law who is an ill-omen for Mangu and that is why she did not beget a male child. Also, they declared that as long as Mangu lives with her, she will beget seven daughters and that all the family and the business would be ruined. Mangu's husband calmly shifted to the city and she restarted her life, away from the atrocities of her in-laws. Chughtai realized that although Mangu was illiterate and unsophisticated, she was not foolish. This is a major childhood experience, that had an immense impact on Chughtai's consciousness—that a woman needs to express herself and it is feasible for her to defy established oppressive norms.

Chughtai assigns the position of literary mentor to her elder brother Azim Beg Chughtai who was already an established writer when Chughtai was still in her teen age. Reminiscing about his mentorship Chughtai becomes nostalgic and note that he would engage in conversation with her for many hours and that is how she developed her sensibilities under his tutelage. Azim Beg would always attempt to incite rebellious in her and that is how the hidden talent flourished to the extent that she becomes one of the major pillars of Urdu literature. Beg was against perverted socially constructed notions of the society, like *pardā* and he commanded his own wife to unveil. But it is so deeply interwoven within the psychology of the women of that era that even after her husband's command, she continued observing *pardā*.

Literary sensibilities had been sown into her by her brother-cum-mentor Azim, writes Chughtai. He taught her that if one wishes to convey some message, one should wrap the same into a story and people would get to know the ideological standpoint without any direct association with the targeted masses. This is a safe ploy as people can't rebel against it. Chughtai writes, "Just as no one can slap you if you say something over the telephone, you can say whatever you want through your stories, and no hand can reach for your throat" (Chughtai *A Life* 13). Her outspoken manner and sparking wit are evident when Chughtai writes:

I enjoy talking to everyone –Shopkeepers, grocers, taxi drivers, even beggars. Teasing old men and women and hearing them hurling curses and calling me names, gives me a special kind of pleasure (Chughtai 14).

Chughtai writes in "Under Lock and Key" "I think the first word articulated by me after birth was, why?" (*A Life* 214), and this perhaps forms the basis of all her fearless writings. Her subject matter, her diction, her tone and tenor forced people to look at its author suspiciously. Chughtai faced

many challenges but kept writing boldly. Female and sexuality have always been sizzling issues for many writers Chughtai was not an exception. Because she belonged to a Muslim family, she observed the subjugation of women not only as a woman but as a Muslim woman that troubled her from within. Religion plays a focal role in subjugation and marginalization of woman. As Cixous writes, a woman must put herself into the texts, Chughtai's works also revolve around the image of women and the secondary treatment women are subjected to in Muslim society. And that has remained one of the central issues throughout Chughtai's life, explicit not only in her writings, but also in her active involvement in matters concerning women. Narrating about the incident at Aligarh Muslim University, when Muslim clerics raised their voice to close the girls' school, she actively mobilized people against them and demanded their right to education (Chughtai *A Life* 17).

KPH reflects consciousness about society, particularly the Muslim society. It reflects Chughtai's anxiety on the dual attitude of Muslim men towards their wives, where they (mis)use *Islam* as a tool for their marginalization denying them their fundamental rights. Women, since ages, have been viewed as objects to satiate physical urges in patriarchal set up. While on the other hand, the physical intimation has always been condemned. This is one of the extreme hypocrisies of society in general, that never ceases to amaze Chughtai. She writes, "From childhood it has been drilled into my head that physical love is dirty" (Chughtai *A Life* 209). Actually, Chughtai was not an exception to expose this hypocrisy, specifically among the elite. Phallogocentric society inculcates such thinking into the consciousness of women with a motive to control their sexuality and limit their sexual lives in order to control and curb them psychologically. Women are marginalized for sexual gratification and kept away from education. In connection to women's education, Chughtai narrates tales of those unfortunate girls who were prematurely married. She underlines the whole issue in conjunction with the sad story of her childhood friend, Mangu; and how she was put to atrocities by her in-laws. Narrating the hue and cry being made by her family when she boldly made demands for her education, she writes that, the mentality of the society towards women's education was so bad that people would equate women's education with prostitution. They were deliberately left without pen and money and treated as commodities, writes Chughtai (Chughtai *A Life* 12).

Chughtai writes about the same attitude of her extended family though her father was flexible and did not create much fuss over the issue. A major issue brought up is the double standard of the men. Chughtai makes note of her uncle's attitude towards a washerwoman with whom he lived for years for fulfilling sexual gratifications, nevertheless when she asked him to marry, writes Chughtai, she was beaten "black and blue." It is here worth quoting her uncle's statement, "I am a Chughtai, you think I'll marry a washerwoman and spoil the good name of my family" (Chughtai *A Life* 160). One cannot deny

that Islam provides for marriage regardless of caste, but undoubtedly treats sex without marriage as a grave sin. Chughtai's uncle's statement does not only reveal his attitude but also exposes the power struggle between two genders which is purely a socially constructed notion. Religion has been reduced as a tool for power to subjugate the underprivileged. And that is what Chughtai takes up through her writings. A major part of *KPH* is dedicated for the same, so much so, that it wouldn't be wrong to assert that the subject of this autobiographical writing serves the underlined purpose, in one way or the other. By specifying her uncle's callous attitude towards the washerwoman, Chughtai attempts to take up larger question that spreads across the entire social fabric. Her uncle's story underscores the reality of Muslim patriarchal society where religious and social set ups reduce women to the category of the 'second sex' and create binary opposition between male/female, upper caste/ lower caste.

Chughtai's attitude towards Hindu-Muslim relationships is inclusive and this is underlined when Sushi, her childhood friend places a tiny idol of Krishna *Bhagwan*, she accepts it wholeheartedly. Although she is a Muslim for whom keeping an idol is religiously prohibited, her innocent friendship makes her keep it. She believes in a much higher philosophy that overlooks religiously and culturally established norms. Chughtai's syncretism is visible in her pain when she hears of Hindu-Muslim riots in any part of the country, "... my pen mocks at me." (20). She would take out the small Bhagwanji and ask him innocently, "Are you really the dream of a romantic poet? Aren't you more than a fancy, longing? Are you the imaginary creation of a helpless woman, shackled by so many restrictions, which after creating you, swallowed life's poison with a smiling face?" (20). One can see through the pain that Chughtai feels at the atrocities people mete out on religious pretexts. Communal disharmony and experiences of religious bigotry made Chughtai more secular and humanistic in her approach.

When she was asked whether she takes Rasheed Jahan as her guru, Chughtai was of the view that imitating anyone blindly is not her practice, for one should do things from one's own understanding. She writes, "I am not a Taj Mahal made of stone – all symmetry and proportion. Innumerable questions trouble my mind" (Chughtai *A Life* 216). She also takes on Freud and says, "Somehow Freud seems a fraud" (Chughtai *A Life* 219). So, it can be asserted with much certainty that Chughtai was one of the bold and unconventional feminist voices who took on various issues, concerning women in a Muslim society.

The Lethals of "Lihāf"

Age-old masochism of the patriarchal set up was once again reiterated with the publication of "Lihāf." The story was tagged with obscenity and Chughtai was summoned to court for writing about a homoerotic relationship, whereas male authors like Firaq Gorakhpuri and Bankim Re-reading "Lihāf" and *Kāghazī hai Pairahan*

Chandra Chatterjee and many more from the Western world wrote about homosexuality but did not face trials. This underlines the sheer hypocrisy of patriarchal institutions. *Lihāf* has been one of the most controversial stories Chughtai is known for. She was inundated with letters full of threats and criticism after its publication. The trial went on for two years and finally Chughtai was absolved of all charges since there was no word which could have been tagged as obscene in the story. Chughtai narrates from the viewpoint of a nine-year-old girl who hardly understands what is happening.

Lesbianism has existed since ages, nevertheless Chughtai had the temerity to voice it. *KHP* brings into light the entire trial where the witness attempted to prove “Lihāf” was an obscene story. The phrase “collective lover” used in the context of “The Quilt” was claimed as obscene, but the court discarded it, based on the fact that the word lover has always been used by great poets since ages. Claiming it to be objectionable for the girls hailing from decent families like Chughtai, the attempt to allege her could not be avowed. The court was bereft when Chughtai’s lawyer rhetorically asked, what if Chughtai doesn’t align herself to come from so-called elite and reputed family?

It would underestimate Chughtai’s talent if we recognized it in conjunction with “Lihāf” only, for she contributed much more to Urdu literature. *Dozakhī* (Destined for Hell) is one of other essays dedicated to her elder brother-cum-mentor, Azim Beg Chughtai, after his death followed by a prolonged disease. Quite frankly, she shared the secrets of Azim Beg Chughtai with her readers. He would never offer the obligatory prayer and read Quran lying down, often go off to sleep; on being objected, he would say, “I am reading a legal book” (Chughtai *Dozakhī* 1960). His admiration of Yazid and denigrating Hussain, being a *Shi’ā* Muslim and going against the hierarchal status of Hussain brought severe criticism not only to Ismat Chughtai but largely degraded the status of her dead brother. Saadat Hasan Manto in his essay “Ismat Chughtai,” mentions that his wife asked Chughtai, after reading the essay, “What is this non-sense you have written?” (206), Chughtai simply asked her to be quiet. “Pompom Darling” is another significant essay where Chughtai attempted to critique the talent of Qurratulain Hyder, her younger contemporary. Chughtai did not hesitate in the least to question Hyder’s choices for her writing mostly deals with the elite class. She writes,

I asked her to clarify how long she would continue to be obsessed with Shosho and Fofa and *Bharatnatyam* and takes dips in the swimming pools of the *Savoy de Lamar*. Why don’t you come out and see what lies in the outside world? (Chughtai “Pom Pom Darling” 119)

Chughtai underscores here that authors/writers ought to write with a responsibility for the masses without any reservation to highlight the social and cultural issues plaguing society.

The marriage of Nawab and Begum Jan is more of a fulfillment of social demand, but to satiate his carnal desires Nawab deviates from the accepted norm. Presumably, open house was an under-terrain for Nawab to reach out to his inner psychosexual urges. To safely satiate them Nawab used the religious platform where “young, fair and slim-waisted boys whose expenses would be entirely borne by him” would be taught and trained religious lessons (Chughtai 8). Whereas, Begum Jan, belonging to the “second sex” could not enjoy the prerogative of uninhibited sexual expression, sated her sexual desire under the quilt with Rabbu. These different roles of domination and subordination assigned to Nawab and Begum Jan’s masculinity and femininity respectively in a patriarchal set up, is aptly captured by Connell and helps comprehend different shades of masculinities. Connell writes:

To recognize diversity in masculinities is not enough. We must also recognize the *relations* between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance and subordination. These relationships are constructed through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate, exploit, and so on. There is a gender politics within masculinity (37).

Sexual heteronormativity is challenged by Nawab’s choice of pampering “slender-waisted boys” and such a negligence pushed Begum Jan to satiate her sexual desires with Rabbu’s body. Not entirely, but it would not be implausible to iterate that Begum Jan’s overall alienation, especially because the way Nawab dodged her sexually, pushes her to step into (un)natural sexual intimacy with Rabbu. The trajectory of her choice isn’t straightforward. Dissatisfied with Nawab for not receiving what she was entitled to, she ostensibly shifted to alternatives. Plausibly, her choice could not be an easy one, for the simple fact that she was doubly colonized- one by the patriarchal set up and secondly by gender hegemony. Being a woman along with being a Nawab’s wife she had to carry the burden of legacy with her, and thus she can’t simply shun her responsibilities and live the way she wanted to, unlike Nawab who could exercise his prerogative and could live up to his sexual choices, though in a very camouflaged manner. The sexual intimacy with Rabbu was not a sought-after one but apparently a compromise, and it’s conspicuous when Chughtai writes,

Who knows when Begum Jan started living. Did her life begin when she committed the mistake of being born, or when she entered the house as Nawab’s new bride, climbed the elaborate four-poster bed and started counting her days? Or did it begin from the time she realized that the household revolves around the boy-students, and that all the delicacies produced in the kitchen were meant solely for their palates? From the chinks in the draw room doors, begum Jan glimpsed their slim waists, fair ankles and gossamer shirts and felt she had been raked over the

coals (Chughtai 8)!

In the magnificent house of Nawab, the zenana was the corner where Begum Jan would get rid of her loneliness for a while. This way, the zenana becomes a feminist utopia for Begum Jan 'When the Goods Get Together' (Irigaray 1981) and the outer grandeur of the Nawab's palace would combine with the inner psychosexual urges of Begum Jan, thereby, making her feel complete for a while. Sexually abandoned by Nawab, who somehow does not fit in the format of "hegemonic masculinity," Begum Jan entered her own feminist utopia. Nawab falls under the sub-category of a series of masculinities- one which does not ideally have an upper hand over others, and therefore, Nawab and Begum Jan could not conduct "gendered lives." (Wood and Fixmer-Oraiz 1993)

To conclude in Connell's words:

Rather than attempted to define masculinity as an object (a natural character type, a behavioral average, a norm), we need to focus on the processes and relationships thorough which men and women conduct gendered lives. 'Masculinity', to the extent the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices thorough which men and women engage that place in gender; and the effects of these practices in bodily experiences, personality and culture (Connell 71).

Conclusion

Chughtai is identified as an enfant terrible of Urdu literature. Her observations and perceptions, uncompromising attitude and startling frankness unceasingly unraveled the socio-religious hypocrisies in an ostensibly genteel society.

This study underscores plurality of the subaltern identity. "hegemonic masculinity" and "emphasized femininity" when applied and seen through the lens of the Third World, unravel discrepancies in the lives of women and their pathetic plight. Chughtai via "Lihāf" and *KHP* questions the conditions of women in a Muslim set up and poses a challenge to the monolithic definitions of subaltern, 'hegemonic masculinity, and emphasized femininity.' It is evident that with cultural imperialism, the plight of women in the Third World has been aggravated at all the levels. Addressing Indian women's issues through Western feminist ideals has further aggravated the matter. One of the ugliest repercussions of the colonizer-colonized episode, is that it reduced women of the subject country to a subaltern identity. Third World women have been doubly colonized- one by the colonizer and the other by their own patriarchal set up. Chughtai in *KHP* reshapes ideas of various strands of feminism ranging from Islamic to Marxist, Liberal and Postcolonial. Chughtai's objective delineation of patriarchal cruelties

particularly the objectification of women, and their economic and educational marginalization in Muslim society includes all the strands of the above-mentioned feminisms. *KHP* narrates the untold stories of marginalized Third World women. While Western feminism has not just been insensitive to, but also remains unsuccessful in analyzing their plight holistically against the backdrop of caste and class, region and religion, marginalization, illiteracy and economic disparity. The idea of 'emphasized femininity' has been challenged in "The Quilt" when Begum Jan unreins herself from the social norms and clings to the 'woman' hidden deep down in her heart. The objective delineation of reality, whether it is about sexual orientation in "Lihāf" or the secondary, rather tertiary, status meted out to women in a Muslim society in *Kāghazī hai Pairahan*, becomes a fine example of literary realism.

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