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SUBTLE TRANSITION IN CHUGTAI'S "THE HEART BREAKS FREE AND THE WILD ONE"

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ABSTRACT

Chughtai is often blamed for her myopic view but this paper reads through her the fine changes taking place in the flimsy social traditions. She traces the subtle transitions of the so called norms of the society of her times. We notice that ismat chughtai portrays women in the role not only in the submissive position but also in the powerful positions. All the women characters in her novella *The Wild One* portray a different range of characteristics. Ismat, as said before shows a whole society towards the stage of transition. A society where norms and views are in the process of changing but not completely implemented in the society.

Keywords: subtle transition, society, torchbearer for future,

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A writer of Ismat Chughtai's stature needs no introduction. Each of her work is a testimony of her giant genius weather her novel *The Crooked Line* or her short story *Lihaf* or her novellas *The Heart Breaks Free* and *The Wild One*. A writer is not only a spokesperson of the marginalized and torch bearer for the future but also the scanner of the social changes taking place slyly without our notice. In Ismat Chughtai's novellas *The Heart Breaks Free* and *The Wild One* we stumble upon this very fact. Her novellas are like the nuggets of wisdom which exhibit her astoundingly astute capability to not only inspect an element of change in the society but also render it clear to the reader in her most lucid language. We know this when chughtai asserts that:

And I have never written on heresy, never according to any set rules, and never have I followed the orders of my party or the anjuman ( progressive Association) independent thinking has been my nature and still is. (qtd, in Priyamvada Gopal,69)

In one of her interview to Pakistan radio the interviewer calls her a photographer and we can see, so she is. In both the novellas *The Heart Breaks Free* and *The Wild One* we see the society at the threshold of change. There are many indicators to this effect in the two novellas. The issue of class difference is also addressed in her novella *The Wild One*. Leslie Fleming in her paper aptly says about Ismat Chughtai that her works:

.....Provide an engaging portrait of a society in transition with in a particular period, with some sense of human consequences both positive and negative of human change. (Fleming, 207)

We notice that ismat chughtai portrays women in the role not only in the submissive position but also in the powerful positions. All the women characters in her novella *The Wild One* portray a different range of

characteristics. Nirmala, Puran's mother, Puran's sister, Asha, Chamki etc. at the same time it is worthwhile to pay attention to the male characters of the house. Especially his father and brothers.

Nirmala is the most complacent type of character who is at home and in acceptance with the kind of treatment meted out to women. She works at home, bears children and does not mind whether her husband gives her any kind of attention or not. The narrator says about her children and her husband:

Such strange children, and then her husband, the image of Buddha! The more she laughed the quieter he became. A bania's spirit seemed to have invaded his body; he appeared to spend most of his time managing the affairs of the estate. Yes sometimes he smiled, but that was all. And Bhabhi? She soared like a butterfly all day long. Although she and her husband were as different as sky and earth, they got along well, just as the sky and earth have been getting along well since eternity. (chugtai,307)

Although she has three children yet she is so young to realize her situation in life. she is in bliss due to her ignorance at her young age. She is still playful towards Puran, her brother-in-law.

In comparison to Nirmala, her mother-in-law is an assertive lady. She keeps everything under her control and is orthodox by nature. When Puran decides to marry Asha against the wishes of his family, it is the lady of the house who strictly dissuades him from doing so. On the other hand we see a little bit of reluctance on the part of Puran's father to either scold him or dissuade him from marrying Asha. The following dialogue shows Nirmala's mother-in-law as a strict woman.

There you go again, encouraging him. If you hadn't been so soft, these children might have been worth more today.....all right all right....Puran, Raja Sahib said in a conciliatory tone, don't be so stubborn. Life is so short, why do you want to get into this. Let us suppose for a moment that you do marry that girl. Well, it will be a great mistake. Just think, do you imagine that your mother will let you, me or that girl live in peace? Will she ever accept her?

Look here, ji, why are you beating around the bush, why don't you frankly say what you must say. (Chugtai,348)

The above exchange of dialogue between Puran his father and his mother clarifies that she is woman with her own opinions. She has the power to speak and get her thoughts implemented in the family. Ismat shows a society at the threshold of change. In this society she shows a liberal man and an almost stubborn woman having a decisive role in the family.

Puran's sister is Kamala portrays a kind of woman who knowingly chooses to overlook the trespasses of her husband. She is not complacent with it but she has no choice other than ignoring it. The narrator also tells us that kamala "was not accustomed to too much thinking." it is visible that she does not take decision but decisions are made for her and she promptly follows everything.

Though ismat is often accused of having a myopic view yet its visible that she depicts all kinds of women characters in their different sates and situations. A scholar says

Ismat practiced a particular kind of social commentary in fiction by fearlessly depicting the positions and roles of women in middle class. (Fleming, 201)

Ismat shows a difference between the natures of the servant class as well. In a comparison between chamki and Asha we see that Chamki is the kind of girl who looks for attention from Puran and thoroughly enjoys his teasing. Asha on the other hand loves Puran but does not encourage him from her side. Chamki is a rash girl just like her name whereas Asha hopefully waits that someday she will be able to marry Puran with everybody's blessings. Asha is decent enough to understand that Puran is a forbidden fruit for her and she realizes her status as a maid of the house.

If we compare a few characters of this novella we can see the vivid change that is taking place in the society which Ismat probably tries to bring forth. Puran's brother is a typical husband and a good son whereas Puran comes across as a character who is in transition. His brother is still in business whereas he is preparing for the competitive exams.

Chmaki revels in the little attention which Puran gives her whereas Asha wants to marry him decently or totally keep away from him. Asha even runs away when Puran spots her at his own wedding displaying her

disinterest for a married man. Although when in the end she realizes Puran's medical state she burns herself up with him.

Kamala and Shanta are other women characters in whose action we see the changing society. Kamala overlooks even the overt advances of her husband towards other women whereas Shanta elopes with other man when Puran Does not pay any attention to her. Shanta, Asha, Puran and his father are almost like the representatives of the changing times. Through their assertiveness ISmat alerts us of the oncoming changes. Chughtai's Novella *The Heart Breaks Free* also expatiates the changing trend of the society. There are also many other indicators which display that ismat's sensitivity towards the changing times against the backdrop of still prevalent orthodoxy in the society. The narrator of the novella is a child so his/ her innocence leaves everything for the reader to comprehend.

The child tells us about aunt Qudusia whose husband abandons her and marries an English woman. She loathes her life for some time and becomes an absolute stranger to all the joys of life. We see her mother coaxing her to wear some fineries and jewels but she stays in a state of absolute denial. Uncle Shabbir loves her but cannot express his love to her because she keeps pining for her husband. After waiting for a long time she naturally falls in love with uncle Shabbir and starts adorning herself. The same society which expects her to change cannot accept change in aunt Qudusia. Once she starts dressing beautifully women from her own family start getting worried about her:

Why would a woman adorn herself if the person whose gaze matters the most turns away from her? ...dressing up and wearing flowers does not become a woman whose earthly God turned away from her. She must thank god for whatever meager clothing she can obtain cover herself with it, and eat whatever little come her way. What would people say if they got a glimpse of her fanciful behavior? (Chughtai, 268)

When qudusia does not dress up nicely the whole house hold wants her to do it but when she does all of them get worried. On the other hand Qudusia not only changes but also falls in love with uncle Shabbir and elopes with him deceiving her family into believing of her death. To achieve her love and improve her life she takes a step a drastic as breaking her ties with the family and eloping. Though not so openly yet she asserts her rights and dares to think different.

Uncle shabbir is also a character who questions things around him and sometimes openly asserts what he believes. He reads books sings ghazals and also encourages Qudusia into reading different novels. One fine day aunt Qudusi asserts that if need be she will go after a second husband. When qudusia becomes more assertive and declares everything openly everybody believes that she is bewitched.

The young lady is under the spell of a very powerful saint, he should under no circumstances be antagonized" nani biwi's Maulana from Lucknow stated emphatically. (Chughtai, 285)

These are the kinds of thought which the family believed after qudusia becomes aware of the ways to improve her forlorn status.

Uncle Machu is another character which displays change in outlook of young men in the society. Uncle Machu irritates and taunts aunt Qudusia for her ongoing relationship with Uncle Shabbir. It is only in the end we discover that uncle Machu helps Aunt Qudusia to elope with uncle Shabbir although he loves her very dearly. He also warns her husband and parents-in-law to stay away from her and grant her divorce. He does all this only because he loves her.

Uncle Maachu and Uncle Shabbir are the representatives of the 'new man'. Uncle Shabbir marries a divorcee whereas uncle Machu Sacrifices for the woman he loves so dearly. We see uncle Shbbir has no qualms in accepting a divorcee whereas uncle Machu wants to sacrifice his happiness for his love. He does not want to possess her but he wants to sacrifice for her.

Qudusia's sister whom the narrator addresses as Amma is another woman character who understands qudusia's misery. Although she stays busy with her husband but she knows that Qudusia needs a companion to be with. When Qudusia's mother expresses her concern towards growing closeness between Qudusia and Uncle Shabbir she consoles her saying:

I say, Amma, you're just imagining things. Now you are suspicious of poor shabbir. Because of him the unhappy girl gets to laugh and relax a little. She must have a reason to continue living, don't you think?" (Chughtai,274)

Ismat has almost shown an era in the novella through the mother, elder daughter and the younger daughter. The mother is completely orthodox whereas the elder daughter understands her sister's situation to an extent but the younger daughter is totally averse to the society and wants to do what she thinks is right.

Ismat has said before shows a whole society towards the stage of transition. A society where norms and views are in the process of changing but not completely implemented in the society. In ascertaining and presenting the changing world while not breaking away with the old world is the scenario that Ismat creates. Also the transition period is like the wave that ismat observes, strings it into words and presents it to the reader.

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