



## Representation of Communal Harmony in Ismat Chughtai's Selected Short Stories

### ❖ Abstract:

*Harmony means an orderly, smooth mixing or pleasing combination of elements in a whole. If we bring it in relationship then it refers to a kind of relationship in which various components exist together without destroying one another and without losing own identity. Harmonious state leaves no space for conflict or disagreement of opinion or interest. We can think of various kinds of harmony like regional, geographical, academic language etc., but when we think about communal harmony we will have to think about the order of the universe or cosmos as opposed to chaos.*

*As we know that literature is the reflection of culture and society so in the same spirit we can take Indian literature as parameter to understand or explore the evolution of our Indian culture and society. If we refer the Indian history, we come to know that communal harmony of our nation was threatened and disturbed by the forceful entry and prolonged stay of foreign invaders in our territories. Many ups and downs, discrimination, chaos, disorder, pain, suffering and loss and injustice we witnessed in the past and even in present some hateful incidents ignited by our scrupulous, cunning selfish political environmentenforces us to think about reestablishment of communal harmony in our nation.*

*Many sensitive writers used their writings as a very powerful tool to bring awareness among the people and sensitize them and make them realize the importance of communal harmony for any nation because 'A Community Divided is a Nation Divided, a Community United is a Nation United'. Ismat Chughtai (August 1915 – October 1991), an eminent Indian writer in Urdu known for her indomitable spirit and a fierce feminist ideology stayed in India after the sub-continent was partitioned. Many of her works translated from Urdu to English by Mr. Asaduddin in which she explored evolving conflicts in modern India. She is at her best in the three short stories (Kafir, Sacred Duty and Roots) which are taken up for the present study where she deals with social pressures in India alluding to specific national, religious and cultural tradition. In most of all her works by describing specific situations, events, discussing various sensitive problems, through her character's mindset she ensures communal harmony in the nation and nothing else.*

### ❖ Introduction:

Harmony means an orderly, smooth mixing or pleasing combination of elements in a whole. If we bring it in relationship then it refers to a kind of relationship in which various components exist together without destroying one another and without losing own identity. Harmonious state leaves no space for conflict or disagreement of opinion or interest. We can think of various kinds of harmony like regional, geographical, academic language etc., but when we think about communal harmony we will have to think about the order of the universe or cosmos as opposed to chaos.

### ❖ Communal Harmony in Indian Context:

Swami Vivekananda has rightly understood communal harmony in a way that the Christian is not to become a Buddhist nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth. Even our nation has given us power to see unity and communal harmony, not for any division or communality. According to Indian culture, which is well known for its unity in diversity the ultimate goal of mankind, the aim and the end of all religions is but one reunion with God while the aim is one, the method may vary with the different temperaments. Ultimate truth is the basis of all religions.

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### ❖ **Communal Harmony: A Literary Perspective**

As we know that literature is the reflection of the culture and society. So in the same spirit we can take Indian literature as parameter to understand or explore the evolution of our Indian culture and society. Many sensitive writers used their writings as a very powerful tool to bring awareness among the people and sensitize them and make them realize the importance of communal harmony for any nation because 'A Community Divided is A Nation Divided, A Community United is A Nation United'. Ismat Chughtai (August 1915 – October 1991), an eminent the most accomplished Indian fiction writer in Urdu known for her indomitable spirit and a fierce feminist ideology stayed in India after the sub-continent was partitioned. Many of her works translated from Urdu to English by Mr. Asaduddinin which she explored evolving conflicts in modern India. She is at her best in the three short stories (Kafir, Sacred Duty and Roots) which are taken up for the present study where she deals with social pressures in India alluding to specific national, religious and cultural tradition. In most of all her works by describing specific situations, events, discussing various sensitive problems, through her character's mindset she ensures communal harmony in the nation and nothing else. Through her works she advocates communal harmony as she herself came from a family of Hindu, Muslim and Christian who all live peacefully. She read not only the Quran but also the Gita and the Bible with openness.

### ❖ **Ismat Chughtai's Three Stories: Kafir, Sacred Duty and Roots an over views**

**Kafir** is the word used chiefly by Muslims for a person who is not a muslim. According to Koran the Kafir is characterized by his wordliness means he is one who is unbeliever, disbeliever, infidel who rejects Allah who does not believe in Muhammad as the final messenger of Allah. It is typically a derogatory term as an extremely offensive curse word by Muslims and in the same sense the word Kafir is used in the short story by a muslim girl (Slightly dark complexioned a girl from a muslim family named Munni) for Pushkar for his childhood friend (a boy from Hindu family, fair looking Kashmiri Pandit). Both the families, as neighbours have very cordial relationship. Both the families become very happy and celebrate each other's festivals without losing their own identities; they follow their cultures, traditions but at the same time having strong belief in their religions, respect each other's. Even small children like Munni and Pushkar many times convert themselves just for the sake of the celebrations of each other's festival and food items without realizing the seriousness of conversion. Rather very innocently they quarrel and the words like Kafir and Muslamanti are used. During quarrel even they criticize each other's philosophy of religion and culture and traditions. Right from the early age Pushkar was very much clear that he would marry Munni. Because of their studies they were separated but the feelings remain intact. Pushkar returned as deputy collector in the neighboring district and reminded Munni of their wish of marriage but now being mature (grownups),responsible and completely aware about the changed environment the gulf between two religions, denied the proposal as it would spoil the long lasting friendship of their parents their marriage would bring disgrace and nothing else. They both believed that inter religion marriage is not crime but it will prove an open invitation to trouble. They don't care for religions (either Hindu or Muslim) because they are for them to help and not to make them martyrs but thinking about the future consequences she believes that society will blame modern education system as because of their education they have (adopted, followed) progressive thinking. Pushkar is not happy with Muslim culture where in muslim boys are allowed to marry Hindu girls but Muslim girls cannot marry anyone except Muslims. Even for the sake of their relationship Pushkar is ready to become Muslim because he will have to lose nothing in converting himself because they have realized that they are slave of their long cherished religions, without having control over their life. He plans to elope with Munni and go for civil marriage.

**Sacred Duty** once again Chughtai's presents before us the problem of marriage of a Muslim girl Samina Siddiqi and Hindu boy Tushar Trivedi. Samina is the only daughter of Siddiqi family so very dear to her parents who passed B. Sc with the highest honors. Her marriage is fixed in a decent family. The groom worked in Dubai, not very handsome a bit short. He was without much family encumbrances. So physical features don't matter but his qualities and the money he earns matters a lot which ensured total comfort. The marriage date is fixed so Siddiqi Saheb and his wife are busy and happy on receiving congratulatory telegrams and letters. They have their own planning so Samina is not allowed for higher studies and is silenced with a sharp reprimand. But one day few lines by Samina pulled their world from great heights into a bottomless abyss. She eloped with Tushar Trivedi to Allahabad. Siddiqi Saheb was a progressive, a supporter of education for girls and their freedom of choice in marriage, free from prejudices he live a life of respectability among liberal minded people but his daughter's extreme step pained him a lot. Tushar being Hindu never bothered them, they were not against Hindu but could not tolerate this inter cast marriage. This marriage brought them disrepute, they don't want to share this delicate matter even with friends but Jawwad Saheb, a family member with a trivial practice in Allahabad was called and sought his advice.

Tushar's father Seth Saheb created a scene by sharing the photos of Samina's changing faith. By taking unfair advantage of the situation he objected humiliation of Siddiqi Saheb but at right moment Jawwad Saheb took the situation under his control. Jawwad Saheb behind the closed doors shared his scheme with Siddiqi Saheb and reached Tushar's house. Even Tushar didn't like his father's news paper stunt but being only son of the family many times he was reminded of his sacred duties. Siddiqi saheb with his secular talks impressed Sethji and brought Tushar and Samina with them **so that they could also perform their sacred duties toward them**. In Delhi in the presence of all friends Tushar was asked to convert to embrace Islam to which Samina objected Thrice they married first civil marriage, then Hindu and now Muslim one. For Samina and Tushar it didn't matter much because in convent they were christ's lamb. For them no religion matters, only relationship matters. Siddiqi Saheb followed the footsteps of Sethji and took care to take all the photographs of Nikah and sent to Sethji to dishonor him and gave even in news paper. Next day Samina and Tushar run away from the hotel and a letter was delivered to them which was written by both of them discarding their religions. They went to become good human being and accept supremacy of one God.

In **Roots** Chughtai depicts the picture of partition of two continents. The English had left Hindustan, inflicted a deadly wound which would fester for years to come. All witnessed the river of the blood but no one had the strength left to stitch the wound. Muslims were thrown and most of them were shifted in refugee camps. The narrator of the story is a small girl from Muslim family who started their packing and preparing to leave their home. Once again there are two families so close to each other over three generation Country's partition is not capable enough to rupture the family relationship. Two families are untouched by the developing and developed serious issue of India and Pakistan.

Roopchandji before and after her father's death remained same person, a great supporter, nothing was done without consulting him. When the entire family members left for Pakistan, her Amma stayed steadfast in her position, not going with the caravan consisting of her sons, daughter, and sons in law, and daughters in law and grandchildren. She surrendered all the assets of her life to the mercy of God. Each corner of her house offered distinct stories, they had their own memories, own stories to tell. Fifty years of marriage life she spent in the house but her children left in search of peace and contentment because they didn't want to be killed by Kafirs. She used to light a lamp at the place where her husband breathed his last and now how all of a sudden she could discontinue with it.

One person the most unhappy with the situation was Roopchandji. The vacant house seemed taunting him, as if he had broken it, brick by brick, with his own hand. The roots of the house laid in his a very existence and in his presence only the family is uprooted. During sleep Amma was dreaming that her whole family came back and again life returned to the house and really it happened. From Loni junction Roopchandji brought all the children back in the house.

In all the three stories Chughtai has given the evidence of communal harmony. Many times we see it in disturbed state but at the end see its re-establishment in the marriage of Munni and Pushkar, elopement of Samina and Tushar and Roopchandji's bringing the whole family back with Amma in the same house.

### ❖ Conclusion

Ismat Chughtai wrote novels, plays and travelogues. However her most remarkable achievement lies in the short stories form. Her creative temperament was suited to this genre where a single human situation is dramatized and a single girl or a boy at the most two or three characters are given prominence. Her sparkling dialogue, brilliant turn of phrase and sense of humour the essential ingredients of her style achieve startling effect when she works on a small canvas with a few bold strokes. She uses this canvas not only as the social and cultural matrix for her characters. But also as the psychic landscapes on which the human drama is played out. The themes and characters of her stories are taken from the sphere she knew intimately the middle class muslim and hindu families of Aligarh, Agra and Bareilly with their elaborated network of relatives. Here in these three short stories by describing specific situations, events discussing various sensitive problems, through her characters mindset she ensures communal harmony and nothing else.

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