

AUTHOR OF THE WEEK

“ISMAT CHUGTAI”



Ismat Chughtai is one of the most unconventional Urdu writers of the twentieth century. She was born on 15th August 1915 in Badayun, Uttar Pradesh. She has several short stories, novels and plays to her credit. Her stories are powerful and talk about the issues faced by common people like you and me. And to reach them, she uses the common tongue instead of elegant words and phrases. As Ismat Chughtai herself says that *‘Perhaps my mind is not an artist but an ordinary camera that records reality as it is. The pen becomes helpless in my hand because my mind overwhelms it. Nothing can interfere with this traffic between the mind and the pen’.*

The power of her stories cannot be described in words. She was a hard core feminist in an era when the concept of ‘Feminism’ had not evolved. She mainly wrote about female sexuality, prostitution, and Child marriage. Her stories are not only about ordinary people, but also meant for ordinary people. It opened the doors to a new kind of literature which talked about the issues faced by a woman in her life. Anybody can relate to her stories and she brings you face to face to very harsh truths about you yourself. It maybe because of this that many people called her stories obscene and full of filth. She was charged in the Lahore High court for her story ‘Lihaaf’ which is one of the most popular stories written by her. The story talks about homosexuality in the pre-independence era where these things were not even talked about and Ismat Apa brought them to life. Many of her books have also been banned at various times during their publication history.

She was a rebel right since her childhood. Raised among 9 siblings, she always had to strive hard to get things done for her. She fought with her family to get schooling after 10th standard and then went forward to complete BA and then an Bed being the first Indian Muslim women to do so. She was also the member of the progressive writers’ movement in India. Her stories are being read and translated in different languages and in different mediums. Maybe it is only now that we really understand what her stories meant and how differently she looked at the world in which we live.

BOOKS AVAILABLE IN THE LIBRARY:

1. Chughtai, I. (1994). Pratinidhi Kahaniyan. New Dehli: Rajkamal Publication.
891.4337 CHU 023892
2. Chughtai, I. (1998). Do haath. New Dehli: Katha Prakashan.
891.4337 CHU 023894
3. Chughtai, I. (2009). Masooma : a novel. New Delh: Rajkamal Publication.
891.4393 CHU 023910
4. Chughtai, I. (2006). The crooked line. New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York.
891.43937 CHU 023920
5. Chughtai, I. (2016). Lihaaf. New Delhi: Rajkamal Publication.
891.4310 CHU 023909 & 023911

WEB RESOURCES:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpHs7sbu3A4> : Play on 'Chauthi ka joda' a story about societal pressure of marriage and how it affects the life of two young girls.
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6pSvo_yp0PQ : Interview of Ismat Chughtai
3. <http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00urdu/ismat/> : Contains English translations of some of her popular stories

ARTICLES ON ISMAT CHUGTAI:

1. <http://www.openthemagazine.com/article/art-culture/naseeruddin-shah-on-ismat-chughtai-if-only-we-can-live-half-the-life-she-did>
2. <http://www.livemint.com/Leisure/NTt7hWtC5yAWZx0cQCrYAM/Ismat-Chughtais-fearless-pen.html>
1. <http://www.urdustudies.com/pdf/08/08ismat.pdf>

FOR PEOPLE INTERESTED IN READING HER STORIES IN URDU:

1. <https://rekhta.org/poets/ismat-chughtai/ebooks>

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