

A STUDY OF SHAMAN'S CHILDHOOD IN ISMAT CHUGTAI'S THE CROOKED LINE

*Ms. Neena Agnihotri, Research Scholar, Department of ASL, Amity University, Lucknow,
email-agnihotrineena@gmail.com*

*Prof. (Dr.) Kumkum Ray, Director ASL, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow Campus,
email- kkray@lko.amity.edu*

*Assoc. Prof. (Dr.) D.K. Singh, D.A.V. P.G. College, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, email-
deepaknath921@gmail.com*

Abstract:

Life does not come with a blueprint, everyone encounters twists and turns, ranging from minor setbacks to life-changing catastrophes such as the death of a loved one, a life-altering accident, or a major disease. Each shift has a particular impact on people, resulting in a unique avalanche of ideas, intense emotions, and apprehension. When an undesirable scenario knocks at the door, people generally take time to overcome the grief or pain caused by it. Instead of getting traumatized resilient people adapt positively and overthrow the pain. Women born in a patriarchal society undergo different adversities. Few of them survive and overcome while the rest fall victim to the traditional beliefs and continue to suffer. This research paper will focus on one such isolated woman Shaman in her childhood, who is the protagonist of the novel *The Crooked Line* (Tehri Lakeer) (1945) which is a translated work written by Tahira Naqvi. It was written by Ismat Chughtai in the Urdu language. The researcher intends to explore the isolated childhood of the protagonist. The relationship of the protagonist during her childhood, devoid of affection and care, will be critically analyzed. The conclusion part will ponder over the facts laid down by the author and her intention behind writing this character.

Keywords: female, affection, childhood, care, relationship, trust, gender, crooked & grief.

Introduction

Life does not come with a blueprint, everyone encounters twists and turns, ranging from minor setbacks to life-changing catastrophes such as the death of a loved one, a life-altering accident, or a major disease. Each shift has a particular impact on people, resulting in a unique avalanche of ideas, intense emotions, and apprehension. People, on the other hand, adapt successfully to life-changing and stressful experiences over time, which brings a change in their overall personality. People respond to life's difficulties in a variety of ways. Some people experience emotional outbursts, while others will become enraged, and still, others will become physically aggressive. Others may deflate, become numb, and feel helpless and overwhelmed as a result of what has occurred. Some people may depict themselves as victims, blaming others for the

events that have occurred. They are in a downward spiral and are filled with negative emotions. Then there are those who manage to get through it. They recover and emerge stronger and better than before. This research paper will explore the interactions between the actual text, the producer of the text, and the readers of the text. The text always carries a meaning with which it influences people. The novel *The Crooked Line* (1945) also shows the historical, social and cultural contexts. The novel is set in just before the pre-independence era. It shows glimpses of the planning of the partition and the worst effects of the second world war. The researcher intends to understand the phenomena through the interpretation of discussions and narratives expressed by the different characters. The meanings are given to a discussion through the analysis of communicative action.

The aim of the research is to demonstrate the character's development especially the females and how they try to mitigate the traumatic experience of their life in early childhood. In this translated work, Tahira Naqvi characterizes the novel as "a vehicle whereby Ismat Chughtai exposes the social-cultural conflicts and the psycho-sexual determinants" that exercise control over the development of female responsiveness. (Flemming 201-02) These traumatic experiences in a way also reflect the author's life. Therefore, it's a semi-autobiographical work which showcases the resilient spirit of the author. This research work will employ different perspectives of the scholars which will be used as a literary lens to find out how our present-day challenges, joys and celebrations are scripted by modern writers of commitment.

When an undesirable scenario knocks at the door, people generally take time to overcome the grief or pain caused by it. Instead of getting traumatized pliable people adapt positively and overthrow the pain. They channel their energy in other directions bringing a positive outcome to an adverse situation. Norman Garmezy published the first research findings on resilience in 1973. According to Garmezy, as quoted by Shean, resilience is "not necessarily impervious to stress. Rather, resilience is designed to reflect the capacity for recovery and maintained adaptive behavior that may follow initial retreat or incapacity upon initiating a stressful event" (8)

Women born in a patriarchal society undergo different adversities. Few of them survive and overcome while the rest fall victim to the traditional beliefs and continue to suffer. Discrimination and inequality in society propagate patriarchal beliefs which further leads to disparity in society. In this duly formed society, one section becomes marginalized and is reluctant to voice their opinion. In case they wish to then either they are oppressed else they fall prey to the society. Few of the marginalized section, have the indomitable spirit to bounce back. One such person is Ismat Chughtai (1915-1991). Ismat Chughtai wrote maximum work in Urdu language which was translated by many Indian authors in various other languages. *The Crooked Line* is a pitiful piece of writing. Chughtai rehearses the implications of complete emotional deprivation with the calm enthusiasm of a sociologist in it. "Those orphaned children whose parents are imprisoned by life," (Chughtai) she dedicates emphatically in her book. Shaman, an unwanted tenth child in a middle-class Muslim household several years before the end of the Raj, may have an Amma and an Abba in theory, but she is completely alone in

reality. Shaman's physical and emotional mistreatment robs her of something we might call her 'soul,' for lack of a better term. This research work focuses on the secluded feeling in her childhood displayed by the protagonist Shaman in the work *The Crooked Line (Tehri Lakeer)* written by Ismat Chughtai and translated by Tahira Naqvi. This research work is divided into three parts. The first part explores the early childhood development the protagonist. The second part of the research paper will analytically reveal the relationship of the protagonist with the other characters. The conclusion part will ponder over the facts laid down by the author and her intention behind writing this character.

Over the past few decades, women have been undergoing changes and are restricted to certain defined roles by society. They are shown powerless and victims by many literary writers. But Ismat dares to exhibit the atrocities and gender-defined roles through her writings. Her writings showcase a deep concern for the position of women in society. She even goes one step ahead to look deep into the emotions and unravels the truth and trust in relationships. She strips apart the inner psyche of the characters and dares to show the naked truth to the readers. Ismat boldly expresses that there are no set rules of the society to follow a straight line while on the other hand she reveals the hidden truth which appears to be a straight line but in fact it is a crooked line. In fact, she is not judgmental in showcasing but leaves it for the readers to apprehend the deeper meaning. Ismat addresses sexual politics, homosexuality, many identities, and transgressive urges with a free hand, portraying them as parts of diversity rather than vices, and attempting to dispel homophobic prejudices. "Ismat, or "Lady Chenghez Khan," as Qurratulain Hyder famously nicknamed her was inspired by the Progressive Writers Association, a group of writers that included Rashid Jahan, Mulk Raj Anand, Ahmed Ali, Sajjad Zaheer, Mahumuduzzafar, and others, and her writings crystalized radical ideas." (It 2) The dynamic relationships between modernity, bodies, selves, families, countries, institutions, gender, and class are the focus of radical concepts.

The Crooked Line is divided into three phases. The first phase deals with the childhood memories of the protagonist named Shaman. The first phase is divided into fifteen chapters. The second phase explores her adolescent relationships and is divided into sixteen chapters. The third phase of the novel discusses about the turmoil in her relationships when she gets married and a new Shaman is reborn at the end of the novel. This research paper will focus only on the first phase only.

In *The Crooked Line (Terhi Lakeer)*, Ismat Chughtai cuts the core of the female psyche, exposing it layer by layer in her blazing, candid style like no other writer of the Indian subcontinent, male or female, has done before. She leaves no stone unturned to reveal the relationships of women with each other within the sphere of the extended family. It also explores sexual urges growing in young girls who are living in an environment that is dominated by a female presence. It surveys the relationship between men and women- their social and political milieu. She exposes the social-cultural conflicts and the psychosexual determinants that govern the development of female consciousness.

In the early chapters of *The Crooked Line*, we see how women, unempowered in a man's world are unable to govern their own destinies, develop a flawed and second-class mode

of empowerment within the confines of their limitations and begin to oppress other women; they also show how women quite unselfconsciously and ignorantly participate in the perpetuation of the tradition of oppression resultantly females cruelly cut down another female just as society cuts them down. One such example is Shaman's sister Bari Appa, widowed a few years after her marriage and having returned to her parent's house with two young children, has relinquished the joys of living and in keeping with the demands of convention, had annihilated her femininity for the sake of her father's honor, even though she is still young.

The first phase of the novel *The Crooked Line (Tehri Lakeer)* begins with Shaman's birth and takes the readers into the childhood memories of Shaman. Her birth in the family after nine children was unprecedented and her mother regarded herself: "as a youthful maiden despite the fact she had given birth to so many children." (Chugtai 3) Ismat takes the readers into the world where women in the domestic world are given no rest and are bound to satiate the desires of their husbands as stated in the novel: "This was all Abba's fault. Amma was never given an opportunity to breastfeed her children." (Chugtai 3) The children in the family were left in the care of a wet nurse. The author introduces us to the environment wherein females do not have a say over their male counterparts. The females in the family are subdued and dominated by the males. This results in Shaman to be a neglected child and she expressed: "There was only one task in the world Amma was fit to perform, that was giving birth. She had no idea what came after that, nor did anyone feel to enlighten her." (Chugtai 33) Throughout the first phase of the novel male character is absent in the novel but the male presence is made to realize; "As for Abba, his need for his wife came before her children." (Chugtai 33) Shaman missed her fatherly affection and care. Since the children of the house are neglected and devoid of motherly care the nannies take over the role. Unna was a wet nurse who entered Shaman's life and looked after the childhood Shaman. Shaman's mother was filled with vanity, self-love and was a remorseless person. The narrator stated: "Amma, who regarded herself as a youthful maiden despite the fact that she had given birth to so many children, was scrubbing off dead skin from her heels with a pumice stone." (Chugtai 4) Unna, a sixteen-year-old girl, was involved with her lover and at one point of time she neglected Shaman's call. When Shaman screamed, she pretended to be worried about any mishap to Shaman. "The same night Unna was sent back to Agra by train." (Chugtai 5) due to her careless behavior towards Shaman.

Perhaps, the entire enigma is dominant of the female world in the novel. The novel begins with introduction of the birth of the protagonist. Shaman and revolves around the various experiences she encountered in her life. This bildungsroman novel is divided into three phases. The first phase reflects the childhood Shamman. Though the entire house was occupied with females and daily chores but Shamman was emotionally deprived of a motherly affection. After Unna left another wet nurse Manjhu tried to replace Unna. Shaman was contemplating: "How was she going to find the Unna whose soft, warm bosom provided the comfort she had experienced in her mother's womb? She went into the fit as soon as soon as she was given the bottle." (Chugtai 5) Shaman became a neglected child which led to a stubborn behavior and developed less faith towards commitment and love. In the words of the author: "But the burning intensity of her hunger eventually forced her to accept the worst and, when Manjhu took her in her lap, gave her the bottle and a few drops of milk slunk down her throat, she became calm."

(Chugtai 5) At an early age Shaman did not have the audacity to bounce back in an adverse situation but she adapts herself to the new changes. After Unna left, Manjhu looks after the daily needs of Shaman right from bathing, cleaning, eating, drinking milk and sleeping. She tried to fill the emotional gap.

In this initial phase Shaman had childhood fantasies and infatuation which the readers experience a libido in young Shaman when she saw Manjhu taking bath. Despite being smacked by Manjhu to move out of the bathroom, Shaman led by a magnetic force continued to advance and smiled with her twinkling eyes. Ismut here gives a hint of a child developing attraction towards the same sex. Gradually Shaman adapted herself to the new change and accepted the upbringing of this new nanny. She became emotionally insecure "... and cling to Manjhu, snuggling in her clothes like a puppy, looking for her Unna." (Chugtai 5) These traumas in her childhood are reflected in her later life. Ismut dives deep into the character formation at the early years of childhood where the attitudes and traits begin to form. Manjhu dressed up Shaman and: "... applied missi to her teeth and kohl to her eyes." (Chugtai 7) Shaman being a stubborn girl loved to explore the outside world. She slipped out of the house and played with the red mud in the fields: "... the dirty, foul-smelling chicken coop drew her to itself." (Chugtai 8) and returned home with a thick layer of dust on her hair, eyes and face and her nostrils packed with snot and muck. Manjhu gives spanking: "... pummels and punches while Shamman continued to bray like a calf." (Chugtai 7) Her salty tears wash the dirt out from her eyes and unclogged her nose. She was given a bath with thunderous thwacks and slaps by Manjhu to clean the dirt. The treatment given to Shamman at an early age develops in her a defiant spirit. In fact, perseverance is a common trait shown by the resilient characters. Shaman promised herself that she won't play in the dirt with the chicken, in the field with the dirt but as soon as she was dressed in neat and clean clothes: "... Satan tempted her" (Chugtai 8). The red mud tantalized her, the dirty coop welcomed her like a newlywed bride and she forgot the pledge that she had taken. When she returned home she was prepared for the spansks and "... her pride which was being crushed by the daily blows." (Chugtai 8)

There are two instances in her life which lets out her frustration wherein the readers get acquainted of her inner turmoil. First, she takes out her frustration in her dreams wherein the reciprocation of thoughts and actions are observed by the readers. She dreamt that she was dressing up Manjhu in which she was slapping Manjhu, taking off her clothes, giving her a bath. Shaman scrubbed Manjhu's elbows and heels and dresses her up. She wants to pay back what she had received. Although in reality Shaman was reprimanded that if she moved out Manjhu would break her legs. Hearing the harsh words, the past memories of her previous nanny haunted her. Shaman saw: "Unna surfaced from somewhere, making her sad and then so angry that in her reverie she deposited large amounts gram flour on Manjhu's hair and rubbed it in violently"(Chugtai 11). Shaman developed a sexual urge at an early age when she saw "her wet nurse Una whose lactating breast turned into an erotic object of nourishment and made the little girl a voracious seducer of this substituted mother"(Sharma 211).

Perhaps, another instance is when she regains her spirit in the real world after returning from her dreams, she felt the urge to strike her doll. She slapped her and kicked the doll

with her hands and feet. Finally, the doll was shredded and the sawdust was scattered everywhere. The remains of the sawdust stayed: "... on her tongue like stale blood; she felt she had actually murdered someone" (Chugtai 12) She hid the fragments of the smashed doll to save herself from the daily spanks of Manjhu. Shamman mishandled the *alif-bay Reader* (Book Reader) on a sewing machine wherein she was certain about Manjhu getting annoyed. Shamman sobbed tearlessly. She was attuned to the spanking by Manjhu so she made up her mind not to weep. The perseverance is seen at this point when she "... cried only with her throat. Her mind remained unaffected and calm." (Chugtai 5) She was sure that if she continued crying every now and then by the daily blows she would have been finished "... if she had the seven seas at her disposal." (Chugtai 12)

The readers see and feel her initial struggle, a phase of transition from changing of her nannies to the firm determination of the feeling of isolation being developed. She is left at the hands of nanny for the upbringing. Ismut takes one step ahead to show the sharp contrasting reality with the naked truth that though the house is surrounded by the females but the protagonist is devoid of motherly affection and care: "Of course, Shamman wasn't Amma's child; after the departure of her wicked Unna, Manjhu had taken the place of her mother." (Chugtai 15) According to the psychoanalyst the childhood memories form a base for the personality. The emotional setback in the childhood is reflected in her adulthood.

The attachment and affection with Manjhu were also short lived. Manjhu got married and Shaman had sleepless nights. She had nightmares and : "... Again and again , she called out Manjhu's name and wept, her throat ached from constant sobbing, her voice weakened, but who was going to listen to her?" (Chugtai 18) She wailed in the night, roamed all over the house, the guests and the inmates of the house slept after the exhausting daily chores. She was neglected and her emotional needs remain unsatiated. In the words of the author: "For many days no one remembered if she was in the house or not, or she needed to bathed or have a change of clothing." (Chugtai 18) She had a tough time, she woke up in the night and "...cried for her".(Chugtai 19)

Another lady entered her family domain *Bari Appa*, who is widowed and came with her two children. She is extra cautious about her children "...ready for attack, if someone touched her children." (Chugtai 20) Both mother and daughter did not leave any stone unturned to humiliate or criticize Shamman. *Bari Appa* commented on both of them stating the difference: "Noori is personable, shy, well-mannered and clever at reading, she is bad-tempered, ill-mannered, illiterate, shirks her studies." (Chugtai 23) During this time Manjhu visited the house for the first time after marriage. The inmates of the house were excited to welcome the newlywedded bride and groom. Shaman was thrilled that she might get the same affection and attention but in vain. As Shaman is neglected by the new ayah at her place, she was filthy in dirt so Manjhu failed to recognize her. *Bari Appa's* daughter Noori took the place of Shaman and Noori jumped into Manjhu's lap. *Bari Appa* and Shaman's mother screamed to inform Manjhu that Shaman's head was full of lice and Manjhu pushed her away apprehensively. Manjhu showered her love on Noori. Shaman was heartbroken and felt devoid of tender care and affection at every stage in her life. Shaman being rejected by Manjhu made her feel

humiliated. Shaman cried bitterly and no one thought about her. She felt dejected and contemplated: “Today her heart as well her mind was wrenched; the soiled smelly clothes absorbed her tears.” (Chugtai 21) Everyone in the house enjoyed the sweets brought by Manjhu but no one noticed Shaman’s loneliness and pain. When Manjhu took out two dolls to be given to Shamman and Noori, Noori grabbed both the dolls and insisted for both. Shaman took out her frustration by ripping dirty clothes with her teeth and fixed her gaze on the dead flies hanging from the cobwebs. She sat in the corner of the veranda and it seemed that “...she was wearing a magical cap which made her invisible.” (Chugtai 21) Shaman took out her frustration in the midnight and in the morning, she was seen lying on the ground with bleeding nose and torn clothes. The inmates of the house mistake her to be dead. She was given intensive care and treatment immediately. After being looked after by her mother and *Bari Appa*, Shaman felt being reborn but her happiness was short lived. As soon as she recovered everyone’s behavior underwent a change. The inmates of the house started behaving in an indifferent manner as earlier. The statement given by a lady in the neighborhood states the condition of Shamman. She says: “Did Allah have to be stingy with Shaman even when it came to bestowing an ailment upon her? She had no choice but to get well.” (Chugtai 26)

Seeing her condition Shaman was taken along with Manjhu to her in law’s house. This change of environment gave an exposure to Shaman to adapt herself to the new circumstances of her life. She adapted to the change faster to overcome the pain residing in their heart. Shamman had gone through these changes since childhood. When Manjhu replaced Unna, Shaman adapted herself to the new norms set by her nanny. After this when *Bari Appa* ruled the home-front of Shaman wherein *Bari Appa* poses herself to be victimized for being a widow. She often compared Shaman with her daughter Noori and demeaned her in every task. Shaman gets attuned to this humiliation.

Further at Manjhu’s place Shaman could not sleep with her, when her husband was around. So, Shaman remained a little detached from her. She refused to address Manjhu’s mother-in-law as *Dadibi*. Manjhu was blessed with a baby and Shamman did not receive the same attention. She started missing Noori and her two brothers. Therefore, she was brought back home. Shaman was used as a tool for rectifying Noori’s mistakes. *Bari Appa* often told Noori:

“If you are not obedient everyone will curse you like they curse Shaman.

If you don’t bathe, you’ll have lice like Shamman does.

You’re telling a lie, just like Shamman does.” (Chugtai 33)

In fact, Vanderstoep and Johnston have mentioned two specific kinds of analysis. Here in this research work the researcher intends to study the human interaction in the society which is a part of conversational analysis. It entails the interpretation of discourse taking place in a natural environment. The above-mentioned cited statements given by *Bari Appa* show the humiliation and demeanor of Shamman. The second kind of analysis is the narrative analysis which analyses the naturally occurring story telling. The narration done by the author proceeds further which will explore the structure of the story. This structure of the story helps in

community building, forming and maintaining relationships. It enhances in establishing identities and values. Ismut talks about a Muslim society where females are confined to a specific domain. They are restricted to purdah system.

When Shaman returned home, she was mentally prepared that she could not have Manjhu's affection and her mother's attention. She realized that Manjhu's affection and longing for her was of no use. Shaman's emotional psyche goes through a change to accept the harsh truth of life. Shaman expressed her heart saying: "I thank the burglar who took so much from me; he left me destitute and with no fear of losing anything more." (Chugtai 32–33) The readers feel a stronger Shaman evolving gradually from the despair and grief. The pain and isolation can be clearly felt by the readers wherein Shaman has no fear of losing anything in life as she has attuned herself to the solitude. But in her heart, she has the spirit to bounce back when required. This new Shamman retaliates and repays the humiliation made by *Bari Appa* to Noori. She belittled Noori when she showed her hands applied with Henna was compared to "...betel-leaf spittle splattered...." (Chugtai 35) on the hands of a villager.

Further, Shaman's influence on Noori corrupted her which made *Bari Appa* worried. She missed her husband since Noori was learning bad things and *Bari Appa*'s health was also declining. So, it was decided to send Shaman to a boarding school. On being spoken to her affectionately by the matron. Shaman was convinced that to love someone or being loved by someone is a burlesque. She had enough experiences of bonding with people in her childhood. Although: "she fled from love the way a young bird flees from the noise flapper." (Chugtai 47) Shaman had heartburns in the past which made her tough to keep herself detached from loving someone. Shaman's new phase begins in girl's school cum hostel. She was embarrassed in the initial days because of the basic courtesy being missing in her. She had not received the formal education in her early childhood. We are intimated her actual name almost at the end of first phase of the novel when she joined the boarding school. Her class teacher called out her name *Shamshad Fatima*. In a weeks' time, Shaman was demoted to a lower class due to the poor performance. In this new class she behaved as a leader since she was aware of what was being taught. She was way ahead in age, intelligence and knowledge. We see a new Shamman at this juncture. After going through so many storms of her life when she was given a new environment, she explored her strength and turned her weakness into a new headstrong Shamman. Ann Masten, a clinical psychologist defines resilience as "... the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development." (Shean 16)

Shamman's resilient spirit and a drastic change is observed when she joined boarding wherein, she was denied by her classmates due to lack of manners. A new environment again pops in when she was demoted to a lower class. Thus, this perspective of Shaman does not withstand risk but change to accommodate risk as done by her while the nannies were replaced one after the other.

When she returned home after two months of boarding school, she was a strong person to deal with the sharp remarks given by the inmates of the house. She had developed a habit of stealing food from the kitchen cupboard. The morsel of the food kept safely inside her mouth,

she walked calmly with a humming sound. That changes are observed by the reader when earlier Shaman used to sit quietly in the verandah sobbing out her loneliness. On returning back to the boarding school she found a new teacher in her class Miss Charan. Her entry into Shamman's life made her a refined Shaman. Instead of punishing her for her mischievous behavior Miss Charan bestowed her responsibilities. Shaman became the class monitor. Miss Charan had given a comfort to Shaman and developed an informal relationship with Shaman. Both of them would be laughing and giggling like old buddies. Miss Charan called Shaman at her place to assist in completing the household chores. Shaman got double promotion and she was happy about it. She was way ahead of the class to which she was demoted earlier. Miss Charan was the first person after Manjhu: "... to create a place in Shamman's heart." (Chugtai 50) Shamman was ready to do any difficult task on the request of Miss Charan. Shamman had developed a romantic feeling that overwhelmed her heart all the time. She was drawn to Miss Charan's presence anywhere in the school. Shamman was so much obsessed with Miss Charan that she could feel her presence in her absence. In the night she found herself in front of Miss Charan's room. She started doing sleep walk. Some days she found herself sobbing in front of Miss Charan's room in the night. The matron of the hostel grumbled and propelled her towards her room. In the morning she admired Miss Charan playing and teaching basketball to the girls in the hostel. Shaman felt her touch in the night and presumed herself to be picked up by Miss Charan on her bed. Miss Charan's affection is short lived. When the Principal of the school finds Shaman in Miss Charan's bed, she asks Miss Charan to leave the school. The description given in the novel is left for the readers to apprehend: "Miss Charan was trying to make Shaman sit up straight.... She was sitting on Miss Charan's bed! A real bed!... She was dragged back to her room. The next morning the principal asked her a hundred questions, but she sulked and kept her mouth shut. How was it possible that she tell her all the things she thought, felt and saw?" (Chugtai 53)

After Miss Charan left, Shamman became hard-hearted. She realized that the people she loved left her one after the other. The thought of getting attached reminded her of the past incidents of her life. She is one of those resilient characters who make mistakes and learn from them. Resilient people analyze their faults and do not wish to repeat the same mistake again. She blamed herself and thought that something was wrong with herself. She remembered Unna, Manjhu and then Miss Charan. She undergoes a turmoil of emotions introspecting her circumstances and herself. That year Shaman failed in the examination and was sent to missionary school. She studied there for two years. She recalled the past incidents and memories of Miss Charan which "...seared her mind." (Chugtai 54) Shaman's inclination towards Christianity made her mother decide to send her back to the old school. Noori joined her in the same school. Shaman was growing up gradually. She could see and feel the bodily changes in herself. She was startled and confused about the layers of flesh "... being plastered over her." (Chugtai 56) So she had started avoiding the sports class. She made one or the other excuse and once she even slashed her foot with razor in order to stay away from the sports class. Noori was a witness to all the excuses made by Shaman.

Shaman and Noori were the cousins staying at the same place since childhood. Her mother called as *Bari Appa* rebuked and humiliated her often. Noori tried to share the love of

Manjhu and eliminate Shaman from the good books of Manjhu. She insisted of both the dolls which Manjhu had brought for both of them. Shaman was used as a tool to reprimand Noori by *Bari Appa*. But when Shaman and Noori started studying in the same school, Shaman maintained a distance with Noori. She did not share her secret of the changes in her body. In fact, when Noori communicates false stories about Shaman in the college, Shaman retaliates. Shaman gave few smacks to Noori not getting scared of *Bari Appa*'s reaction. Shaman was prepared to retaliate in the absence of *Bari Appa* and would give Noori a taste she would never forget. On knowing about Shaman's behavior with Noori *Bari Appa* wrote a letter to the principal requesting "to save the orphaned Noori from Shamman's clutches." (Chugtai 59) So Rasul Fatima became the new room partner with Shaman. Rasul Fatima makes a move and tries to touch Shaman's neck in the night. Shaman felt: "Rasul Fatima's fingers dug into her like nails...." (Chugtai 60)

Shaman moved in a manner and her elbow landed in Rasul Fatima's bulging eyes. Shaman retaliated and enquired her about this behavior to which Rasul Fatima said that she was: "Her Rasul Fatima." (Chugtai 61) Shaman got up and pushed away her *charpoy*. Rasul Fatima tried every bit to come closer to Shaman but she rebuked Rasul Fatima. Even Rasul Fatima confessed her love to Shaman via a letter. Shaman pretended to be sick in the night in order to avoid Rasul Fatima. She insisted to join Shaman in the sick room. Shaman locked the room from inside. We can see and feel a platonic feeling from Rasul Fatima's side. Rasul Fatima continued to suffer as her feelings were not reciprocated from Shamman. The next episode of her life made Shamman to focus on finding ways to get around problems rather than the problems themselves. She locked the room from outside while Rasul Fatima was offering prayers. Shaman felt: "... as if she had crushed the head of a serpent with a stone and now the serpent lay writhing while life ebbed from it." (Chugtai 65) Shaman was worried the entire night for not hearing a scream from Rasul's room. But when the door was opened in the morning Rasul did not complain to anyone. She was found with high temperature. The matron sent Rasul Fatima to the sick room. Shaman pleaded the matron and joins Saadat's room on the pretext that Saadat is alone. So, she was shifted to Saadat's room. In this entire episode Shaman had learnt how to bounce back when the situation raised. She locked Rasul Fatima in the night and in the morning, she was prepared to face the music if her name was disclosed by Rasul. When required resilient characters acquire help and learn to make the utmost of worst situation into an opportunity. Saadat was her new roommate. But she was not overjoyed to have Shamman as her roommate. Saadat had got the best of the rooms and sharing it with Shaman, she felt it was infringement of her rights.

Saadat's closest friend was Najma. Both of them laughed and talked but as soon as Shaman entered, they remained silent or left on some or the other reason. Shaman went through a phase of unacceptance. Najma was a soft and delicate girl. On seeing her Shamman thought of touching her. She started admiring Najma and: "She became flustered and a chilly perspiration began crawling down her spine, her stomach convulsed and she would feel thirsty." (Chugtai 67) Shaman's hand touched Najma's back accidentally and she felt she had touched a hot plate. Shaman could feel the fragrance of the *koti* which Najma was wearing from her hand. Shaman compares her infatuation the feeling which Rasul Fatima had for

Shaman once. She thought that she had killed the male serpent by removing Rasul Fatima from her life and now Najma was "... seeking vengeance Rasul Fatima's injuries." (Chugtai 73) Najma tries to be friendly with Shaman in the library but as soon as she sees Saadat she snatches away her fingers from her palm. Shaman tries to be congenial with Najma again in her room on the pretext of taking help but Najma made up some excuse and asked Shaman to leave the room. The final examination was about to commence so junior students started wishing the seniors. Therefore, Shaman placed the garland around Najma's neck to which she reciprocated by a tiny smile. Instead of communicating gratitude Najma left to see Saadat in the sick room. Shaman followed her and was hurt to see Najma and Saadat sitting happily and the garland given by Shaman was being tied on the bun of Saadat. Najma had brought many garlands for Saadat. Shaman felt heartbroken but suddenly she heard a voice telling her: "Here, I got fresh flowers from my garden ,do you like them?" (Chugtai 77) It was Bilquis's voice. She was a day scholar of class eight. Shaman felt a jolt and pondered over the feelings being reciprocated from someone else instead of Najma. After the examinations were over the vacation began. So, the students left for a two-month stay at home. The first phase ends with the development of the plot of the novel as well as the character Shaman which will reflect the childhood experience in her latter part of life.

Conclusion

The first phase of the novel *The Crooked Line* ends here wherein we seen Shamman's growth from childhood to a school going girl. The challenges and negligence of the family members towards her could clearly be seen and felt by the reader. She goes through a turmoil of emotions and tries to emerge stronger in the given difficult situation. She becomes strong enough to face the sarcastic remarks given by Bari Appa and retaliates towards Noori when required. The vacuum created by every person who left her in the journey of life made her a strong companion of loneliness. She was attuned to face the adversities of life.

Though in the first phase Shaman is surrounded by females only but she is devoid of the tenderly love. Hardly the readers, see the male character in the first phase of the novel. The readers come to know that there is a father figure but his physical presence is missing in the novel throughout. He is targeted and blamed by the author in the beginning of the novel when Shaman pinpoints: "As for Abba, his need for his wife came before her children." (Chugtai 3) But for Shaman her both parents are being replaced by the nannies. She gets attached to one of the nannies who leaves her. The second nanny who is entirely different from the previous one leaves a mark of desolation and confinement of her feelings. She loses the faith and commitment towards the other encounters of her life. She is not certain about the feeling of love but she is certain that she doesn't have any expectation from the people who love her. There is psychologizing of Shamman from early on; as a child, "She would scoop up some sand in her fist and hold it lovingly against her stomach. She wished she could take all of the world's mud and collect it under her tongue, mix it with her spittle and then let the viscous curds glide down her throat." (Williams 472) She undergoes the humiliation at the hands of Bari Appa who constantly bullies her and compares her to Noori (Bari Appa's daughter)

The readers sympathies with Shaman in the initial phase and try to understand the perplexities and complexities in her relationships. We see these early childhood experiences shape her to become a new Shaman. Since childhood from taking bath to dressing up with the nannies she develops sexual urges which can be clearly seen when she goes to the hostel and gets attracted towards the same sex. Chughtai seduces the readers: "... into believing the truth of her writing, the truth in her writing, precisely because it is so crafted, precisely because she has told true lies, and precisely because her poetic I was not an I." (Patel 227) Her writings makes us familiar with the defamiliarize but it is done with precaution in a way that this familiar doesn't becomes too common. The complex themes of sexuality, negligence of the female requirement and a secluded childhood are touched with utmost care.

Ismat's characters represent the attitude and traits of a feminist phase which later in 1970's Elaine Showalter epitomized in her seminal work *A Literature of Their Own*. She discussed issues like girling, or woman conditioning, female desires, hysteria, sexual paralysis, of women and the unsavory position of females in Indian society in an unconventional style touching upon some controversial and sensitive issues with the boldness and frankness which she is known for. The experiences of Shaman in her childhood made her a strong and a completely changed character who instead of following the straight laid path by society and falls trap in the crooked line.

Glossary

1. *Amma* one's mother (often used as a familiar form of address).
2. *Abba* father (often as a familiar form of address in Muslim families)
3. *Bari Apa* In Urdu language the word Apa, means elder sister.
4. *Dadibi* paternal grandmother
5. *Koti* a South Asian jacket worn by women.
6. *Charpoy* a light bedstead.
7. *Alif-bay reader* the first letter of the Arabic alphabet

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