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+91 99405 72462



+9163819 07438



ijmrsetm@gmail.com



www.ijmrsetm.com

# “Epiphanies and Discoveries through memoirs of Manjula Padmanabhan's "Getting There" and Ismat Chughtai's "A Life In Words"”

**Mahvish Shakeel**

B.A Hons. English, Amity School of Languages, Amity University, Lucknow, India

**ABSTRACT-** Memoirs are an intriguing literary subgenre that provide readers a close-up, informative look into the life of the authors. By revealing their personal experiences, memoirists provide readers a distinctive perspective on the human condition and vital insights that might aid them in navigating their own lives. Manjula Padmanabhan's book "Getting There" and Ismat Chughtai's "A Life In Words" are two examples of memoirs that provide similar insights. The authors of these two memoirs are remarkable women who have made major advances in their specialised domains. Readers can better comprehend the struggles and victories associated with pursuing one's passions and overcoming social barriers by reading about these people's experiences. In "Getting There," Manjula Padmanabhan chronicles her development as a writer and artist. Her autobiography is an open and motivating story of her battles to develop her voice and become established in the field. Ismat Chughtai examines her experiences as a writer and activist in India in "A Life In Words." She provides an eloquent depiction of the numerous difficulties she encountered as a woman in a society that was predominately male.

## TRAVEL MEMOIR

The genre of travel literature encompasses outdoor literature, guide books, nature writing, and travel memoirs. A travel memoir is a travel writing genre all its own. It is not a guidebook, trip diary or marketing piece for the Sunday paper. Rather, it is a delicate mixture of recollection and reflection that reveals how a journey, or a series of journeys, transformed the writer. Our journeys are the stories of us. A notable memoir is an artful depiction of how interaction with an exterior landscape reveals or redefines the interior one. It is the writer's soul turned inside out and set upon a page for all to see. People read them to journey to lands they may never see and to discover their own truths about what it means to be a man or a woman on this difficult, humorous, and sometimes heartbreaking journey we call life. To create something that an editor will find marketable, you should choose a theme and tell your travel story in a way that supports and illuminates it. Travel provides the fascinating unfolding, as places appear in the distance, come closer, and then whiz by, fading into the past. From this perpetual flow of locations, comes a variety of outer experience. What makes each of these memoirs so aspirational? Each contains a clever mix of vulnerability, connection, and exoticism. A travel memoir may appeal to the reader with wanderlust, but a love of and a desire to travel is not a requirement.

## EPIPHANY

An epiphany is a moment of clarity or insight that causes a profound realisation or awareness of something that was previously obscure or elusive. The word "manifestation" or "appearance" is derived from the Greek word "epiphaneia," and it has been employed in both religious and nonreligious contexts. As in the tale of the Magi who experienced an epiphany upon seeing the star of Bethlehem and realizing that Jesus was the Messiah, an epiphany in a religious context is frequently connected with the manifestation of God or a divine presence. An epiphany is, in this meaning, a revelatory experience that fosters a greater comprehension of one's religion. An epiphany can be any sudden insight or realization that causes a change in perspective or behavior in a secular environment. It could appear as an epiphany or a moment of inspiration that solves a dilemma, or it might be the outcome of extensive thought and reflection. In numerous academic disciplines, including psychology, philosophy, and neuroscience, the idea of an epiphany has been investigated. An epiphany can have a significant impact on a person's life regardless of its origin. It may result in fresh perceptions, actions, and attitudes that will help individuals accomplish their objectives and lead more fulfilling lives. Epiphanies are

not always good, and if they are not properly analyzed or acted upon, they can occasionally have harmful effects. It is frequently necessary to engage in intense introspection and reflection in order to have an epiphany. This may entail examining one's own ideas and emotions or looking for fresh insights and experiences.

#### MANJULA PADMANABHAN

ManjulaPadmanabhan is a playwright, artist, and writer from India. On July 10, 1953, she was born in Delhi, India. In addition to journalism, novels, dramas, and children's literature, Padmanabhan is well known for her work in other genres. Her well-known Indian diplomat father, S. Padmanabhan, had a significant impact on Padmanabhan's upbringing and education. She received her education abroad, notably in Switzerland, India, and the United States. She had her schooling overseas and was exposed to other cultures and ways of life, which greatly influenced her work. Padmanabhan started her career as an illustrator and cartoonist for Indian newspapers and publications in the 1970s. She eventually went on to become a journalist and contributed to papers like The Sunday Observer and The Times of India. Padmanabhan started writing plays in the beginning of the 1980s, and this became her main emphasis. —Harvest, which made its debut in 1997, is one of Padmanabhan's best-known plays. In the dystopian future depicted in the drama, people must sell their organs to the wealthy and powerful in order to exist. The play is a critique of capitalism and how it affects human dignity and physical wellbeing.

#### ISMAT CHUGTAI

One of the best feminist writers on the Indian subcontinent, IsmatChughtai was a pioneering Indian Urdu language author. IsmatChughtai was born on August 21, 1915 in Badayun, Uttar Pradesh, India, into an educated and liberal Muslim family who encouraged her literary endeavours. In India, women's writing was still seen as immoral when Chughtai started her literary career in the 1930s. She persisted in producing tales that questioned social standards and addressed issues of gender, sexuality, and social justice. As a result of her early pieces being published in literary journals like Tahzeeb-e-Niswan and Adab-e-Lateef, she quickly rose to fame in Urdu literary circles. The most well-known short tale by Chughtai, —Lihaafl (The Quilt), was published in 1942. This narrative, which depicted a lesbian connection between an older, affluent woman and her young, lower-class maid, caused a significant uproar. Conservative societal groups condemned the narrative, and Chughtai was even charged with obscenity in court. She was ultimately found not guilty, though, and the uproar over —Lihaafl helped to build her reputation as a courageous writer who was not afraid to take on taboo issues.

#### GETTING THERE BY MANJULA PADMANABHAN

**The First Chapter: Departure** describes the author's preparations for the trip. She explains how she had always dreamed of traveling to America, and how the opportunity finally presented itself when her husband was offered a job there.

**The Second Chapter: Flying** Padmanabhan describes her experience on the long flight to the United States. She talks about the discomfort and boredom of being stuck in a plane for so many hours, and the difficulty of adjusting to the time difference.

**The Third Chapter: Arrival** details the author's first impressions of the United States. She talks about the shock of seeing how large and sprawling the country is, and the sense of disorientation she experiences in a new and unfamiliar environment.

**The Fourth Chapter: Settling In** focuses on the challenges the author faces in adjusting to life in America. She talks about the culture shock she experiences, and how difficult it is to navigate the complex social norms and customs of a new country.

**The Fifth Chapter: Making Friends** is about the author's efforts to build a social network in America. She talks about the difficulty of making friends in a new country, and the sense of isolation and loneliness she experiences.

**The Sixth Chapter: Exploring** details the author's travels around the United States. She talks about the excitement of seeing new places and experiencing different cultures, and the sense of wonder she feels at the vastness and diversity of America.

**The Seventh Chapter: Homecoming** is about the author's return to India after several years in America. She talks about the mixed feelings she has about leaving behind the life she has built in the United States, and the sense of nostalgia and longing she experiences for her home country.

### ***A LIFE IN WORDS BY ISMAT CHUGTAI***

#### **Chapter 1: Childhood Memories**

In the first chapter, Chugtai describes her childhood in the small town of Badayun in Uttar Pradesh, India.

#### **Chapter 2: A Move to Aligarh**

The second chapter sees Chugtai's family move to Aligarh, a larger city with a thriving literary scene. She describes the impact of this move on her writing, as well as the friendships and connections she made with other writers and intellectuals.

#### **Chapter 3: Marriage and Motherhood**

In this chapter, Chugtai discusses her marriage to a fellow writer and the birth of her children. She reflects on the challenges of balancing her personal life with her writing career, as well as the impact of motherhood on her perspective and writing.

#### **Chapter 4: The Partition of India**

Chapter four explores the impact of the partition of India on Chugtai's life and writing. She describes the violence and chaos that erupted during this period, as well as the displacement and trauma experienced by those affected.

#### **Chapter 5: Travels in Europe**

In this chapter, Chugtai describes her travels through Europe, including visits to London, Paris, and Vienna.

#### **Chapter 6: The Women in My Life**

Chapter six focuses on the influential women in Chugtai's life, including her mother, grandmother, and female friends and colleagues. She reflects on the role of these women in shaping her identity as a writer and feminist, as well as the impact of their support and guidance.

#### **Chapter 7: A Life in Words**

The final chapter sees Chugtai reflecting on her life and writing career. She discusses the challenges and rewards of being a writer in India, as well as the importance of telling diverse and authentic stories.

### **GETTING THERE: EPIPHANY AND SELF-DISCOVERY**

The moving travel memoir "Getting There" by Manjula Padmanabhan details the author's quest for self-awareness, development, and artistic happiness. In the course of the book, Padmanabhan discusses her experiences travelling to



different parts of the world, meeting new people, and facing her worries and uncertainties. Her journeys turn into a metaphor for her inside voyage of self-discovery and artistic expression. The concept of epiphany—the abrupt awareness or revelation that alters one's outlook on life—runs throughout "Getting There" as one of its major themes. Self-discovery, or the process of figuring out one's own self and ideals, is another important theme in "Getting There." In order to experience different cultures, meet new people, and challenge her biases and preconceptions, Padmanabhan travels. As she travels, she starts to doubt her own identity, her values, and her presumptions about the world. When Padmanabhan travels to the Tibetan refugee camp in Dharamsala, it is one of the most moving times in the book "Getting There" when he discovers himself. She comes into some nuns from Tibet who have emigrated here in pursuit of freedom to practise their religion. Padmanabhan starts to rethink her own privilege and presumptions about religion and spirituality as she hears their stories and learns about their challenges.

### GETTING THERE: FEMINIST POV

With a feminist perspective on gender, ethnicity, and identity, Manjula Padmanabhan's travel book —Getting There: A Feminist's Journey to the Heart of the Black Forest is a provocative reflection on her experiences in Germany. In this paper, I will examine how Padmanabhan's feminist viewpoint influences her travel to Germany-related observations and insights. In her analysis of gender norms and expectations in German society, Padmanabhan first shows her feminist perspective. She emphasises how established gender roles are. Her experience as a female traveller in Germany has been impacted by the way social and cultural relationships have been moulded by norms. For instance, she points out that German society is frequently based on rigorous systems of order and discipline, which can make it challenging for women to make their voices heard in public. —I am surprised at how often I feel like I'm in the way, how often I find myself stepping aside to let others pass, she writes. (Padmanabhan 22. Her knowledge of the ways patriarchal standards can limit women's movements and activities and cause them to feel excluded is evident in this statement. In addition, Padmanabhan's feminist viewpoint influences her assessment of the representation of women in travel writing. She points out that many travel writers have a tendency to exoticize women from other cultures by depicting them as weak, docile objects of male desire. By claiming her own agency and liberty as a female traveller, Padmanabhan aims to contradict these preconceptions. She discusses, for instance, how she purposefully chooses to travel alone, despite social pressure to do so with a male partner, as a method to show her independence and subvert gendered presumptions about what it means to travel. I am a woman travelling by myself, she writes. I'm doing something that should be dangerous, frightening, and foolish (Padmanabhan 6).

### A LIFE IN WORDS: EPIPHANY AND SELF-DISCOVERY

Chughtai has some of the most profound epiphanies when she realises that her work has the ability to question social conventions and expectations. After the release of her short work —Lihaafl (The Quilt), which received harsh criticism for how it portrayed lesbianism, she came to this revelation. Despite the criticism, Chughtai stood by her work and wouldn't alter it in any way. Through this encounter, Chughtai came to understand the ability of her writing to question social norms and expectations. Self-discovery, or the process of figuring out one's own self and ideals, is another important theme in —A Life in Words. When Chughtai travels to her ancestral hamlet in Uttar Pradesh, it is one of the most moving times in —A Life in Words when she learns about herself. She challenges the patriarchal norms here and Her identity has been influenced by the gender roles that characterised her upbringing.

### A LIFE IN WORDS :FEMINIST POV

The autobiographical book —A Life in Words by Ismat Chughtai describes her experiences as a writer in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century India. The author of the book analyses her own experiences navigating gendered power dynamics in Indian society from a feminist point of view. In the book, Chughtai uses the story of her own life to illustrate how society norms and gendered power structures influenced women's lives. She also stresses the value of female unity and the necessity for women to aid one another in their fight. For independence and equality. She discusses her close friendships with other female writers, for instance, who served as sources of motivation, encouragement, and support. She

emphasises the impact of traditional gender norms on social and cultural interactions in India and how this has affected her experience as a woman writer throughout the entire book.

## CONCLUSION

The trip book —Getting There addresses the themes of revelation, self-discovery, and enlightenment. Padmanabhan explores new facets of herself and her creative expression by travelling, facing her concerns and challenging her preconceptions and biases. Her autobiography can inspire everyone who wants to discover who they really are and lead a more genuine and satisfying life. India, the United States, and Europe are just a few of the places the author has been and recounts her travel experiences.

A Life in Words is a stirring autobiography that delves into the ideas of revelation, self-realization, and epiphany. Chughtai fights societal norms and expectations, wrestles with her own identity, and learns about herself via her experiences as a writer and her relationships with the society around her. Discovers new facets of her craft and of herself. Her autobiography can inspire everyone who wants to discover who they really are and lead a more genuine and satisfying life. Ismat Chughtai enthralls readers with her journey through her life as a writer and as a woman surviving in a world that is changing quickly. In addition to providing a detailed account of her own experiences and relationships, her travel book offers a distinctive viewpoint on India and its culture. Chughtai's writing is beautiful and perceptive throughout the book, perfectly capturing the essence of the people and places she encounters. She expresses her own worries, questions, and challenges in writing with candour and openness, but she also demonstrates a strength and hope that are incredibly motivating. A celebration of the ability of language and storytelling to unite us with one another and with ourselves, —A Life in Words is fundamentally a celebration of this power.

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