

# Sacred Duty

Ismat Chughtai

# What is the central idea of the story sacred duty?

- This story tells us **differences in Hindu Muslim religion , their beliefs , traditions , rituals, method of worshipping and many more** . It also gives us slight idea of how people with even one generation gap can have differences in their perceptions when it comes to religion.

# What is the story of roots by Ismat Chughtai?

- In Jadein (Roots), Ismat tells a story about **an old woman who is unable to understand the intricacies of Partition**. She doesn't want to leave her house for newly formed Pakistan. She loves her roots and doesn't want to get cut-off from her roots.

# What is the central idea that story is trying to convey?

- The central idea can be best described as **the dominant impression or the universal, generic truth found in the story**. Therefore, the central idea statement should avoid using the names of characters. Central ideas reflect the discoveries, emotions, conflicts, and experiences of a story's main character.

# What are the three primary orientations toward the sacred?

- The three major religious orientations are **sacramental, prophetic, and mystical**. In all the major world religions, one of the three can be found. Sacramental orientations are mostly found in the Roman Catholicism, Christianity and Buddhism.

# What is the major theme in Roots discuss?

- Kunta Kinte's story illustrates an enduring theme of African-American life: **the conflict between assimilation and separatism**. In Africa, Kunta would never have been confronted with this issue, but in the American colonies he is subject to the powerful pressures of assimilation.

# What are the four major aspects of sacred reality?

- The 4 modes of manifestation of sacred reality include: **person, object, space, and time.** particular religious traditions illustrating each one.

# What is the sacred triad?

- 'triad', from Latin: trinus "threefold") defines God as being one god existing in three coequal, coeternal, consubstantial persons: **God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ) and God the Holy Spirit** — three distinct persons sharing one essence.



# What is a moral at the end of a story?

- A moral (from Latin *morālis*) is **a message that is conveyed or a lesson to be learned from a story or event**. The moral may be left to the hearer, reader, or viewer to determine for themselves, or may be explicitly encapsulated in a maxim. A moral is a lesson in a story or in real life.

# What are examples of sacred values?

- Values like **human life, health, nature, love, honor, justice, or human rights** are seen as absolute and inviolable — in effect sacred. Trading them off against secular values (e.g., money) is considered taboo.

# Summary

In this essay, I will talk about how social tension in India and imposition are displayed by Ismat Chughtai in her short story “Sacred Duty”, which is an example of literary reflection about the individual concerns, and a work which corresponds to the Progressive Writers Movement.

First of all, it's important to understand the cultural context of the story. India's partition (1947) left a lot of ethnic and nationalist tensions, especially between Pakistanis and Indians. Today, India is known as a country that has been under a lot of religious bigotry, religious tensions and religious violence, notoriously between Hinduism and Islam. Major Indian religious groups have caused a lot of conflicts against religious minorities throughout the years. Evangelism and conversions are very disfavoured by many. Social hostilities and persecution, either physical or ideological, have been ever-present ever since. In Ismat's own words, “in India there has always been disunity and rivalry” (Shah; 2005). We find the story set in a scenario derived from all the former events.

Having arranged the Muslim marriage, the Siddiqis are planning the next-day wedding of Samina, her darling daughter. Suddenly, Begum Siddiqui Saheb read a letter from her, in which she informs she has just eloped and married Tashar Trivedi, an Hindu guy. Next thing we see is the reaction of the family: and thoughts of murder and revenge. Was it a matter of religion?

We didn't know until after pictures of Samina "converting" to Hinduism were published in a newspaper, showing her participating in a Hindu ceremony arranged by Tashar's father, Sethji Trivedi.

After this, Siddiqui Saheb is shattered by the news and he begins thinking to himself that, India was, after all, "a nation of Hindus". Then he thinks about how different things would have been if he had accepted "fine positions" in Pakistan. Here we see it not only a matter of religion, but there is more.

Jawad Saheb helps Siddiqui to think up a plan: to re-convert Samina to the Islam, taking her back to the religion of the family. Forcing someone to re-convert is indeed a sign of religious hostility, but, maybe in this case there was something else. Maybe it was not only a matter of religious identity; after all, Siddiqui Saheb “was a progressive” and “liberal” who allowed girls to study and marry “whomever they pleased;” someone whose family “had never been involved in a dispute over religious convictions,” and someone who “had nothing against Hindus.” Neither was Siddiqui Saheb religiously jealous; after all, he didn’t “bother who was Christian and who was Hindu” at get-togethers, he believed Bhagman and Allah were names to refer “to the same power”, and he even “quoted extensively” from the Gita, and the Bible, thinking that “all these faiths were sacred.”

So why does he use coercion to try to re-convert Samina to the Islam? Let us consider an answer to this question when Siddiqui exclaims: “I’ve inherited my religion.” For him, this statement implies the importance of Islam not so much because of the features of the religion itself, but because it was inherited as a family’s tradition, a Pakistani inheritance. Maybe he wanted to force Samina and Tashar to convert to Islam, to submit not to the will of God, but to the will of the family. Siddiqui had been publically ashamed, and someone had to “pay a debt” to their “family and friends.

- The Muslim author states through Samina that her re-conversion was a “farce,” yet Siddiqui insisted because it was symbolic for him: for the pride of the family. Sethji had “made a fool of [Siddiqui] for all the world to see,” and Siddiqui “couldn’t ignore that.” Chughtai shows to the reader some sources of social tension and imposition: they don’t come out of true religious feelings, but from other factors like social rivalry between families and their traditions (i.e. the Siddiqui Saheb vs. Sethji), social rivalry between cultures (Pakistan vs. India), and mostly from the problem of being unwilling to let others to take their own decisions. These social rivalries disguise themselves under the clothes of religion, but they aren't really these.
- Noteworthy, the whole story deals with independence from the family. Samina and Tashar love their families, but they don’t want them to impose decisions anymore. Tashar admits that “from the very beginning, [he] has done whatever Mataji and Papaki have told [him] to do,” but now he and Samina want independence: they are choosing now another belief in God, another special language (English), another special place to live (and no longer Allahbalma).

Once Ismat Chughtai said that in her family “there were Hindus, Muslims and Christians who all live peacefully” (Shah; 2005), and I see that proposal in *Sacred Duty*, where she expresses this belief too, but concludes that it is necessary to abandon impositions, arranged marriages or forced conversions, as Samina and Tashar concluded. Marriages and conversions must be chosen consciously and willfully. As a Christian, I totally agree that God surely wants that each one of us should decide which road to take, without our family’s imposition, without a culture’s imposition, or without the prohibition of a culture. The final letter in Chughtai’s story implicitly asks us to consider that, indeed, that people could marry and could freely decide which religion to follow and how to believe in God, but at the same time, we don’t need anyone forcing us to do this *their own way*, because we would like everyone applying this sacred duty of respecting each other’s free will. One must have the right to speak, the right to suggest, the right to dialogue, the right to exhort, the right to preach, but nothing should be done forcibly and by coercion.

Thank You