CHAPTER – 111

Intracultural Conflict: A Comparative Approach to
The Nature of Passion and Clear light of Day
In this chapter, an attempt is made to analyse the intra cultural conflict depicted in the novels of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala and Anita Desai. In Jhabvala's *The Nature of Passion* and Desai's *Clear Light of Day* the cultural confrontation is not the usual east versus west but it is between tradition and modernity, which may result from the impact of modern western ideology over the Indian one.

*The Nature of Passion* is one of the novels belonging to the first half of the writer's writing career. During this phase, Jhabvala's main concern lies in "an examination and analysis of the social and cultural mores she saw around her." Thus, the author is conscious of how the Indian society is affected by certain changes brought about by westernization resulting from British rule in India. As a consequence, a kind of conflict arises within the Indian tradition
Western education and exposure to Western ideals led the young to declare war on the old. The term generation gap evolved. Modern concepts of material progress and the claims of the individual clashed with traditional ideals and the collective consciousness, sparking off alienation and dislocating traditional norms.²

The Nature of Passion centres around the family of Lalaji or Lala Narayan Dass Verma "who came to India as a Punjabi refugee and started his career as a humble contractor, but through his patience and hard work reached the pinnacle of success and became the biggest and richest contractor amongst his own community".³

Lalaji's family consists of his wife, three sons – Om Prakash, Chandra Prakash and Ved Prakash and the three daughters – Rani, Usha and Nimmi and his widow sister – Phuphiji and his daughter-in-laws – Shanta and Kanta.

Lalaji is "obviously an old-fashioned man, trying to keep pace with the changing world, cluttering up his house with expensive things yet not really liking it all one bit."⁴ Even the wealth and social status acquired by Lalaji does not change his traditional and conservative view of life. This point is vividly visible in the opening paragraph of the novel:

Lalaji himself was the only one in the house still to sleep outdoors. In the mornings it was almost chilly and he had to cover himself with a sheet, but he preferred to wake up to sky and hedge and crows rather than to the loneliness of his expensive bedroom. Nor did his wife with whom he shared it. It seemed wrong that just the two.
of them should sleep there, no children, no babies. no relatives come to stay, only pieces of strange and unnecessary furniture. Still, one had to keep up with one's money. A bedroom was a social necessity; so he had bought it. But he slept outdoors as long as he could.

Lalaji's traditionalism and conservatism is reflected in his attitude towards the women folk, especially his wife:

He also knew that a woman is a woman and her duties in life is very different from the duties of a man. Lalaji thought of the women is his father's house and in his grand father poorer, he himself was now very rich: but it had always been the same. The women lived a life apart. They sat together in the inner courtyard and saw to the cooking and the children.

Om Prakash, the eldest son of Lalaji, follows his father's footsteps by being highly traditional in his outlook: He is not highly educated. He married a girl from his own community and settled down in his father's business. It is through the character of Om that the author has tried to portray the Indian joint family system. Om Prakash holds a narrow-minded and old fashioned view towards women. According to him, a woman's domain is exclusively restricted to her house. In this regard, Bijawat Radha makes a remark:

Education has no significance in her life. She should live in the house, learn how to make pickle and food, after this, they should get married, and look after their husband and family.

The author also makes an effort to justify Om's traditionalism when she makes him decide his little daughter's fate as:

Do you know what I will do with that one? When she is seven, I will find a good husband and betroth her. Then she can come back to the house and learn from her mother.
and her aunts to make chapatis and mango pickle when she has learnt that well, and also how to manage servants and children. She can go to her husband's house and be a credit to us there (17).

In contrast to Lalaji and Om Prakash are Chandra Prakash and Ved Prakash or Viddi. Chandra Prakash differs from Om in many respects. Unlike the traditional Om, Chandra Prakash is highly educated and has been to England for higher studies. Instead of joining his father's business, he takes up a job in the Indian government. He then, is married to Kanta who is outside his caste and community. The novel shows Kanta to be a modern and sophisticated woman. In fact, she has imbibed the manners, attitudes and ways of life of an elegant westernised society. In this regard, Neena Gupta makes a point:

Kanta maintains and carries herself well, speaks good English, sends her children to an English school, throws parties at her house, is member of a club and even smokes and drinks at times. Instead of bearing a baby every year of her married life, she prefers to practise family planning. She is poles apart from Shanta, the other daughter -in-law of Lalaji, who is docile and subservient.7

However, the very fact that she has tried to learn the polished ways of a cultured society from women's magazines shows the hollowness of her modernity and sophistication.

Chandra Prakash and his wife do not stay together with his Lalaji or Om's family; they stay separately from their parents and relatives. This is because Kanta dislikes her in-laws and the other members of her husband's family for their crude manners and orthodox life style; and she prefers to maintain some distance between her family and her in-law and their relatives. It has been pointed out by Bijawat Radha:

She does not want to maintain any relations with them.
and this is the reason that she does not go to the hospital immediately, as was expected, to see Shanta, her sister-in-law, who had given birth to a baby girl. The entire household assembled there but for Chandra and his wife Kanta, and this fact was emphasised by the ladies of the house.

However, the very fact that the couple depend on Lalaji for financial help makes the whole idea of nuclear family "only half-formed and quite hypocritical". Chandra Prakash's income is unable to meet the demands of the sophisticated life style of his wife. Therefore, they take monetary help from Lalaji in order to support their living. Ved Prakash or Viddi, the youngest son of Lalaji is also a rebel against traditionalism which he feels is a threat to his individuality. He becomes critical of his own household and its members who are traditional and conservative in their outlook:

We have a radiogram; Viddi went on, seizing this opportunity to confide at least some of his grievances... Nobody ever listens to the radio, though sometimes they put it on when there is film music. Several times I have tried to listen to a concert of classical western music, but each time they have told me that such noises they cannot bear, turn it off. So I turn it off. If I had money, he said in a trembling voice, 'I would buy records of classical music. But I have no money, and even if I had and could buy them, they would not allow me to put them on' (33).

The novelist further writes:

Also there are no books in our house, only the Gita and a few Commercial Registers. When I want books to read I have to beg people to lend them to me, for of course I have no money. He knew that businessmen noisily drinking coffee were acquaintances of his father's but he did not care... 'He will not give me anything, he will not send me to Europe or to America, he will not let me study further. Do you know what he wants me to do?... 'He wants me,' he said slowly and clearly and with a laugh that
was half mocking and half tearful, 'he wants me to go into his business' (33).

Ved Prakash professes to be a part of the modern society, and he "fancies the bohemian life of a poet and despises the dedication to business of his father and his elder brother Om." In his bid to inculcate the ways of the sophisticated and cultured world, he spends his time in the company of artistic and intellectual people like Zahir-ud-din, Tiwari, and Bahwa. Zahir-ud-din is a jobless artist. Therefore, he befriends Ved in the hope of getting some help from his rich father, Lalaji. Tiwari is a government employed journalist; but he never goes to his office. Bahwa is a playwright whose plays are never successful. In this regard, the novelist makes a point:

He looked round the restaurant – yes, he wanted to sit in places like that, places with many waiters and a bar and grill-work lamps and expressionistic murals on the wall. He wanted to sit there and talk with interesting people, with journalists and painters and post-graduate students who had been abroad. But first he wanted to go abroad and lead a very gay life there, drinking and ballroom dancing and sleeping with English girls. Perhaps also he would go to a University and study some more. He would learn about modern art and literature, and then when he came back he would be able to speak about these things with authority, while he treated his companions to whisky and cigars. He would have a beautifully furnished flat all to himself, with books and they would sit and listen to western music on the gramophone and sometimes they would dance. All the girls present would be beautiful and artistic and very modern (29-30).

Ved Prakash's passion for a life based on western values and ideals, seem to exist only at the superficial level. He is not committed to his belief. This half-heartedness makes him a failure in confronting with reality. Therefore, he has to fall back upon the values of his family -- that of his father.
and brother (Om); finally, he resigns to his fate of getting involved in his father's business:

he succumbs to Lalaji's clever bait of a monthly allowance of five hundred rupees. He soon finds the allowance inadequate, which is just what Lalaji had wanted to establish as first step to getting him involved in the business with its promise of endless riches.11

Such a realization is brought about by an incident in which Ved is forced to pay a bill for a party given by his 'modern' friends and he goes to his brother Om for help. Om advises his younger brother Viddi not to pay the bill; and he told Viddi not to bother himself about the caterer's suing him for not paying the bill. This is because the caterer will be very careful before he starts filing a law suit against Om and Ved. In fact, he is surprised enough to find that "both Om and his advice very palatable."12

The youngest daughter of Lalaji, Nimmi symbolises the westernized modern woman, who revolts against the confines of tradition and convention of her community. In a way, she is the female protagonist around whom the novel is centred. In fact, most parts of the novel is concerned with how she wages war against tradition with her western ideals and values and also her final realisation that one can be modern and westernised within the fold of one's tradition.

Being the doted and pampered daughter of her father, she takes full advantage of her position and power to assert her individuality. Her education and exposure to the outside world enables her to develop an unconventional attitude towards life — thus alienating her from the other women of her household and community. She tries to be different from her female relatives
whom she considers them uncultured and crude. She becomes critical of their attitudes and manners:

'How fat they all are!' She thought with disdain, and if not fat, then thin and dry and meagre like Phuphiji. And how badly dressed they were... And what bad manners they all have... one scratched under an armpit, another wiped the perspiration from her face with the end of her sari, another blew her nose between her fingers, and even Rani made a noise and opened her mouth too wide while chewing sweetmeats, Nimmi would always eat with knife and fork and never make a noise while she chewed; she would always have a dainty little silk handkerchief with her and turn away her face when she blew her nose (27).

Nimmi's modern ideas are continually in conflict with the traditional role assigned to a woman of her society. As a consequence, Nimmi becomes an antithesis to the other women of her household (with the exception of Kanta) – her own mother, sisters–Usha and Rani, sister-in-law–Shanta, Phuphiji and other female relatives. She rebukes them for being ignorant and for accepting the conventional values which render them inferior to men. She even becomes sarcastic of the submissive attitude of a married woman towards her husband. This reflected in her talk when she says:

'And when your husband comes... you will never raise your eyes to his face and you will never speak his name and you will never raise your eyes to his face and you will do everything that he tells you to do and if he likes, you will let him beat you?' (155).

Besides, Nimmi is very much against the concept of an arranged marriage in which Usha is going to marry a man whom she hardly knows.

In her bid to be a part of the sophisticated modern society, she does many things: at the college she makes friends only with girls like Rajen Mathur
and Indira who are from elegant modern rich families. Under the influence of these friends, Nimmi "tries hard to imbibe the manners and values of girls like Rajen and Indira who belong to families in which girls are sent abroad to study and allowed to choose their husbands." Thus, she goes to the fashionable clubs with Rajen to imbibe its culture--i.e. to play tennis on the club courts, dressed in shorts and 'light and revealing' clothes and drinks sherry even though it tastes like petrol.

Nimmi's friend Rajen belongs to a family where the parents are liberal and modern in their outlook. These parents believe in the proper education of girls and in sending them outside the country to study and allowing them to mix freely with the opposite sex. This is aptly described by Jhabvala:

'That is what makes Daddy so angry,' Rajen said. 'He says it is a primitive custom to marry girls young, without giving them any education, even if you can afford it, or without letting them see anything of the world. He says this is what retards our progress,' (135).

In short, Nimmi glorifies the values and ideals of a cultured modern society and dwells on them. Thus, it becomes inevitable that she develops it becomes inevitable that she develops friendship with a Paris boy, Pheroze Batli wala. She has met Pheroze at the club and he becomes her boyfriend. She accepts his invitation and goes out to dinner with him; after the dinner Pheroze proposes a drive to Kutub Minar. Nimmi accepts his invitation even though she knows it is not proper for her to do so; so they drive down to Kutub Minar where Pheroze kisses Nimmi. This makes her feel that she encels her friends. And with her faishonable Parsi boyfriend, she has scored a point.

Thus, she feels that she is the only woman (with the exception of Kanta)
in her family who has lived life as it should be lived. This is because she has been fairly acquainted with all the modern ways of life; she goes to the nightclub either with friends or with her boyfriend and even cuts her hair much to the shock and surprise of her conservative family.

At the same time, Nimmi becomes highly conscious of Pheroze's comments on the business man with crude manners, who have replaced the ladies and gentlemen who are once the patron of exclusive Night Clubs like the Intimate. She tries her best to appear fashionable before her boyfriend and makes him believe that she is also from a sophisticated and cultured background: Nimmi said 'Daddy wants me to go to Cambridge in England for further studies (101). However, she fails to discover that her boyfriend also belongs to the highly conservative Parsi family which is no less than hers.

The Nimmi-Pheroze love affair does not last long; it has to end in the exhaustion of Nimmi's passion for a modern way of life. As soon as their clandestine affair by Nimmi's family, her elders immediately arrange her marriage with a boy from their community. As a protest against such an arrangement, she plans for a few attempts of escaping from it; but it does not materialise into anything. Besides, her concept of a love marriage ends when her boyfriend readily gives her up to her arranged marriage. Finally, she resigns to her fate and settles down in marriage in accordance with the norms of her family and community.

Besides Nimmi and Kanta, the novel also depicts other women characters namely Lalaji's wife, Phuphiji, Rani, Usha and Shanta, who symbolise the conventional Indian women. They are shown as a contrast to the Nimmi and Kanta in the novel. These women are traditional in their
view of life. They accept everything which has been laid down by tradition. Their role in the society is limited to the areas of domesticity and other household activities. In the words of Evangeline Shanti Roy, their fate can be described as follows:

'They willingly confine themselves to the women's quarters and spend their whole energy in cooking, managing the servants, rearing the children and attending to the needs and comforts of the menfolk. Their only diversion is gossiping. They have no complaint about their lot and do not wish to change it at all.'

These women readily resigns to male domination and accept their subordinate and inferior status in the patriarchal society. The second daughter of Lalaji, Usha very aptly fits into this type of woman. Her concept of life is governed by her conventional view of life. She has no aspiration to be highly educated enough to converse in English, rather she has no interest in studies: "... she had failed many times to pass her intern" (17). She is very much complacent about her present life style. She leads an easy life and accepts everything whatever her parents have provided her:

'She is lazy and thoughtless,' her mother retorted emphatically. 'All she knows to do is to sit quietly on a charpai and eat sweetmeats.' This was not altogether in correct. Usha was a placid girl and like eating. 'What will you do when you are married in two three months?' Her mother demanded (66).

When it comes to the question of marriage, Usha leaves everything to the hands of her elders: 'They know how things should be done that is why I say yes when they tell to do something because I know it is right'(153). Above all, her idea of happiness is the one which is experienced by her sister-in-law
Shanta. For Shanta, happiness lies in marriage by bearing children and rearing them and adjusting life to the needs and comforts of her husband and his household. This is the custom which is supposed to be followed by every Indian woman since time immemorial.

Towards the end of the novel, even the highly modern and westernised Nimmi is proved to be no different from the traditional women of her household. She, ultimately settles down in an arranged marriage with Kuku, a boy from her community. This is because her cherished ideals and values of a modern society lack depth and are superficial. However, she is happy to know that her dream of an elegant and fashionable life is possible with her future husband. This is vividly described by the author:

She tried to look indifferent; but she was jubilant. She would be, at last a member of the club in her own right. She and her husband would drive up in their car, he sober in evening-clothes, she gorgeous in sari and jewellery. They would dance in the ballroom and dance some more. 'And my father promised me,' he said, 'that after I am married he will let me go to Europe. We will go next year, we will go to England and also to the continent and live in hotels.' (189).

Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* also takes up the intercultural theme but does with a difference. *Clear Light of Day* is divided into four parts. In the first part and the last one of the novel, the present is intertwined with the bitter memories of the past affecting the protagonist and her sister Tara seriously. Whereas, the second part is also concerned with the the part relating to partition of India and the third one with the childhood period of the important characters in the novel. The novel also brings into focus on two other families which are closely associated with the family of Bim. Among them, one is that of Hyder Ali, the Muslim Landlord of Bim's family and the
other is that of their neighbour—the Mishras.

Set against the backdrop of middle class Civil lines Old Delhi, Clear Light of Day revolves round the life of Bimla Das, whose family consists of her parents—Mr. and Mrs. Das, her brothers—Raja and the mentally retarded Baba, younger sister Tara and their childhood nanny—Mira Masi. In the novel, Bim's parents are shown as disinterested and irresponsible; they seem to be busy in their own world and have no attachment with their children. Mrs. Das is a diabetic patient and has, therefore, surrendered her responsibility of looking after the children to Mira Masi. She join hands with her husband in going to the clubs and playing cards. In fact, Mr. Das has been known to his children as "a master of entrance and exits." Thus, their relationship with their children is based on the fact that they are parents who have hardly made their presence felt in their (children's) lives.16

When their mother dies, the Das children do not feel her absence or loss for she had been always at the club when they had been alive. This is has been delineated in the novel:

.... it was a little difficult for the children to remember always that she was not at the club, playing cards, but dead. The difference was not as large as friends and neighbours supposed it to be and the children, exchanging looks of mutual guilt when the neighbours came and wept a few tears required by custom and commiserated and tried to console, tacitly agreed to keep their guilt a secrets (54).

In the same way, the death of Bim's father in a car accident fails to produce a significant impact on the feelings of his children. His sudden departure from their lives seems to mean so little to them:

Few of the people, mostly club members and bridge players, who came to condole, realize how little difference
his death made to the household – they were accustomed to his absence that it was but a small transition from the temporary to the permanent (64).

On the other hand, Mira Masi acts as the surrogate mother for the Das children. In the words of a critic, Sudhakar Ratnagar Jamkhandi, her relationship with the children may be described as an ideal relationship as she could provide them comfort and security that even their parents fail to give:

To them she provides a means to happiness, something their parents never provide.¹⁷

The novel portrays her as the deprived and unfortunate widow with a pitiable history. She is a distant relative of Mrs. Das; although much younger than Mrs. Das, she looks much older than the older woman. She becomes a virgin widow after the sudden death of her husband. Her in-laws hold her responsible for it. As a consequence, she serves the family of her in-laws till she becomes aged before time. She comes to work for the Das family when her in-laws turn her out of their house. Her association with the Dases, especially the children is described as follows:

She was the tree that grew in the centre of their lives and in whose shade they lived. . . . They drew from her and she gave readily – she could not have given . . . she fed them with her own nutrients, she reared them in her own shade, she was the support on which they leaned as they grew (110-111).

The tragic death of Bim's parents gave immense sorrow to Mira Masi; and she could not bear the pain of loss which has been too much for her.

As a consequence, Mira Masi develops a psychological problem and she degenerates into alcoholism and insanity; she finally meets her end tragically. Thus, Bim and Baba are left alone in the family. Tara and Rajan also left the
Among the siblings of the Das home, Bim and Raja are very close since their childhood. Bim has been Raja's admirer. Both the brother and the sister have shared a lot of things in life – their dreams and ambitions together. This is vividly reflected in the text:

Bim remembered how, as small children, Raja had announced, so grandly, 'when I grow up, I shall be hero,' making her instantly, with shining eyes, respond. And I will be a heroine,' which had made Tara feel so miserable and excluded that she ran to Aunt Mira, whimpering 'Bim and Raja say the will be a hero and heroine'(55).

During their childhood, they used to spend a lot of their time together reading, playing and going for walks. Raja would read out to her the poems he had written. When Raja gets infected with tuberculosis, Bim looks after him like a mother. Bim becomes responsible for her household after the death of both the parents. She has to take care of everything in the house. Anita Desai says:

That, and the rent to be paid on the house, and five, six, seven people to be fed everyday, and Tara to be married off, and Baba to be taken care of for the rest of his life and you to be got well again – and I don't know what else'(67).

In fact, the tubercular Raja has been attended and treated by a young doctor, Dr. Biswas who is sent by the business partner of Raja's father. This occurs after the death of Raja's father. Dr. Biswas continues to visit the Das home with the deterioration of Mira Masi's health.

During his visit to the Das family, Dr. Biswas becomes attracted to Bim; and Bim also seems to respond to him in the beginning. However, their relationship does not materialise into anything; on the other hand, it has to
end when Bim decides to give up marriage in order to look after her family.

Later on, Dr. Biswas also begins to understand Bim's decision:

On the other hand, Raja has been fascinated by Hyder Ali and his family. In fact, he has admired his landlord since his childhood and considers him to be his idol: "I think Hyder Ali Sahib used to think of himself as some kind of prince, a nawab. And Raja loved that he longed to ride on a white horse with a dog to run behind him just as old Hyder Ali did. Hyder ali Sahib was always Raja's ideal(25).

In fact, Raja has been involved with the Hyder Ali's family since he was quite a boy. He seems to find refuge and solace in Hyder Ali's house for he is suffocated by the stagnant atmosphere of his own home. Raja would escape from the monotony of his place into Hyder Ali's library. His attraction towards the man and his family may be explained by the way of life he has at his house and moreover, their family's way of life was suited to his temperament. This is aptly described by the author in the text:

It was an almost shocking contrast to the shabbiness of their own house, its peculiarities that hurt Raja by embarrassing him as he grew up and began to compare them with other homes.... Raja naturally inclined towards society, company, applause; towards colour, song, charm. It amazed and enchanted him that in the Hyder Ali household such elements were a part of their lives, of their background.... He felt there could be no house as dismal as his own, as dusty and grimy and uncharming. Surely no other family could have as much illness contained in it as his, or so much oddity, so many things that could not be mentioned and had to be camouflaged or ignored. The restraints placed on him by such demands made him chafe - he was naturally one to burst out and overflow with enthusiasm or praise or excitement. These possibilities were enticingly held out to him at the Hyder Ali's (49).
Raja does not stop worrying about the Hyder Ali's family even during the days of his illness. The sick Raja is so much concerned with his landlord's family which quietly escaped from Delhi to Hyderabad under the pressure of partition riots. He consoles himself only when he gets a letter from Hyder Ali. His letter states that they are quite safe in their home at Hyderabad.

As soon as he gets through his illness, Raja leaves his home to stay with Hyder Ali in Hyderabad. Raja never comes back to look after Bim and Baba since then. Later on, he marries Benazir, Hyder Ali's daughter and inherits his property. Since then, Bim becomes frustrated and has been living in pain for she feels betrayed and abandoned by someone who is dear to her. Under these circumstances Bim has to accept the role of a householder of her family. Her relationship with Raja becomes strained when the Raja sends her a letter as capacity of landlord telling her that he has inherited all of Hyder Ali's property and assures her that she could stay in the house as long as he and Baba want. he would never think of increasing the rent or asking them to vacate the house. Bim, who has loved her brother feels deeply hurt and humiliated by such a letter. The letter becomes the cause of the rift between them.

Tara, the younger sister of the Das home, is different from Bim and Raja. Unlike her elder brother and sister, Tara is weak and less ambitious. During their school days, Bim had been bright and full of life but Tara was dull and inactive, she only feels comfortable in the company of Mira Masi. Bruraj Singh comments:

Tara . . . is considerably . . . less gifted and more ordinary. She admires her elder brother and sister, but is also awed by them and occasionally persecuted by the efficient, talented and ambitious Bim. Raja and Bim want . . . to be a hero and a heroine when they grow up, they want to leave their old house and go away into the big wide world. Tara.
on the other hand is content to be herself. Her ambition is to be a wife and mother when she grows up. She does not want the world; she wants the security of her house and the warmth of Mira Masi. 18

She gets married to Bakul, an Indian diplomat at the age of eighteen. She becomes the mother of two children. Thus, Tara is able to fulfill her dream of becoming a wife and mother. Being the wife of a diplomat, she has travelled and seen the world; this experience has helped her to become a confident and sophisticated woman. In fact, her marriage has helped her to escape from the boredom and lifelessness of her home in old Delhi. However, she realises that she has not fully done so. This is because she finds everything remains the same in her old home when she pays a visit there; she seems to be too immersed into the atmosphere of her home, recollecting memories of the past.

In fact, Tara has come to India to attend the wedding of Raja's daughter, Moyna in Hyderabad. But she finds Bim is not ready to attend the wedding for she holds a grudge against him. At this, Tara tries to bridge the gap between her elder sister and Raja by persuading Bim to attend the wedding. Bim does not go to meet Raja at the wedding ceremony but she forgives for the wrong he had done to her. And she tells Tara that Raja and his family must visit her. Thus, the novel ends on a positive note with the protagonist reconciled to her brother who has wronged her; and she is ready to re-establish the once severed ties with her brother.

In the novel, the novelist also gives a picture of the family of the Mishras so as to distinguish it from that of the Dass. In Contrast to Bim's family which is marked by a sense of inactivity, dullness, monotony and boredom, the Mishras' is full of life with lot of warmth, joy, laughter and playful activities. The author aptly describes the difference between the two families:

Even externally there were such advices differences - at the Mishras' no attempt was made as at Tara's house, to
keep up appearances. They were so sure of their solid, middle-class bourgeois position that it never occurred to them to prove it or substantiate it by curtain at windows, carpets on the floors, solid pieces of furniture placed at regular intervals, plates that matched each other on the table, while imfroms for the house servants and other appurtenances considered indispensable by Tara's parents. At the Mishras' string beds might be carried into the drawing room for visiting relations, or else mats spread on the veranda floor when an influx of visitors grew so large that it overflowed. Melas were ordered in a haphazard way and when the family smell something good cooking, they dipped impatiently into the cooking pots as soon as it was ready instead of waiting for the clock hands to move to the appointed hour.

The chauffeur might be set to minding a fractions baby, driving it up to the gate and back for its amusement or dancelling it on his lap and hitting it spin the steering wheel, while the cook might be called out of the kitchen and set to massaging the grandmother's legs. Elaborate arrangements might be made for a prayer meeting on the lawns to please an elderly relative and then suddenly set aside so that the whole clean can could go and see the latest film at the Regal. Their was a large family of many generations spread through the city, and there was constant coming and going, friends and relations perpetually under one's feet(137).

The Mishras' family has two daughters-- Jaya and Sarla and two sons-- Brij and Mulk. Jaya and Sarla- have little education. The marriages of Sarla and Jaya took place when they were quite young. Unfortunately, their marriages did not work out for they were unable to keep up with the standards of their educated and sophisticated husbands. Therefore, they come back home and became middle-aged and grey. But they work hard to earn their living and also to look after their father and brothers they run a school which gives dancing lessons to young girls. In this way, they become responsible for their family.
On the other hand, their brother are spoiled and are good for nothing and enjoy life at the expense of their sisters.

The novel opens with Bim as a middle-aged spinster teaching History in a college. Bim has been forced to become the householder of her family when her brother leaves home to meet his selfish ends after the death of her parents. Thus, she alone runs her family—taking care of everything including her helpless retarded brother Baba; and she manages the family's business, which has been left by her late father.

Thus, Bim is an educated unmarried working woman who enjoys financial freedom. She has accepted the role of a father by taking care of her sister and brothers and by making arrangement for their marriages later on. This is in conflict with the traditional or conventional role assigned to women in a patriarchal Indian society. In such a society, a woman's primary role is confined to that of a wife and mother. And she is not the one who will provide for the family of the house. But Anita Desai's protagonist represents the new woman—that of the "contemporary Indian urban woman—single, independent, self assured. On a superficial level, such a woman may be seen as 'westernised'."

Bim's desire to be independent, to be courageous and to dress and smoke like a man enables her to grow up both strong and confident:

She could withstand the shock of the sudden death of her parents, the alcoholic Mira Masi, the tubercular Raja and the mentally retarded Baba without drawing back at any stage.

She rejects the traditional role of an Indian woman, which renders her "an insignificant victim or object for others' use and pleasure." Besides.
she is fortunate that there is virtually no one (except her disinterested parents) in her family to teach to the young girls what are expected of them as the weaker sex. This, along with her independent spirit enables her to become emotionally and economically independent in life. In contrast to Bim is her younger sister who is timid and lacks will power and she has no courage to bear the innumerable problems that their family all of a sudden begins to face.

When Raja becomes self-centred and deserts his family for the Hyder Ali's, the disappointed sister (Bim) takes the responsibility of looking after the household. Here, the roles of a daughter (Bim) and a son (Raja) in the family are reversed. The reversal of the roles becomes the clear indication of how the process of westernisation challenges the traditional values of the east. Nevertheless, it is paradoxical that the highly liberated and individualistic Bim has accommodated her alcoholic aunt and retarded brother into her scheme of things. This is because a European woman will not sacrifice her individuality and personal freedom to take care of her aunt and brother in similar situation. As remarked by Vrinda Nabar,

"Her western counterpart in similar circumstances would have most likely dumped them both into appropriate homes in order to preserve her existential freedom."

The novel also deals with an apparently similar case of 'role-reversal' in the family of the Mishras – neighbour of Bim's family. In the Mishra household, there are two daughters Jaya and Sarla and two sons. Unlike Bim who is highly educated, Jaya and Sarla are not very educated. They have failed marriages due to their incompatibility with their husbands. Therefore, they come back home and end up as grey haired middle-aged women. But the women work hard to run their family and to keep their irresponsible brothers happy in the same way as Bim has sacrificed herself for her brothers. This is truthfully
reflected through the words of Mr. Mishra who is the father of Jaya and Sarla:

You and my girls – you are too alike – you work and let the brothers enjoy. Look at my sons there – '... look at them – fat, lazy slobs, drinking whisky. Drinking whisky all day that their sisters have to pay for - did you ever hear of such a thing? In my day, our sister used to tie coloured threads on our wrists on Rakhibandhan day, begging for our protection, and we gave them gifts and promised to protect them and take care of them, and even if it was only a custom, an annual festival, we at least mean it (P. 32-33).

Thus, through the character of the protagonist and the stance taken by her and those of the Mishra sisters (to a certain extent) Anita Desai has dealt with the conflict which arises within the same culture.

A close analysis of the novels *The Nature of Passion* and *Clear Light of Day* seems to reveal that there are many points of similarities and differences between them. In both the novels, the intracultural theme is handled through the characters of the respective female protagonists of the novels.

In Jhabvala's *The Nature of Passion*, the said theme is studied through the personality of the heroine, Nimmi. Here, the conflict or tension arises out of the clash of ideas, values and attitude between the heroine and those members of her family and community who uphold tradition.

The novel shows how Nimmi is passionate about being westernised in her outlook of life. But she belongs to the highly, conservative Punjabi community of India. In such a community, women are restricted to the domestic areas of life and have limited freedom. In short, she has to accept the position of a wife and mother only, whereas, in a modern westernised society, women are free to exercise their will and assert their individuality. In the same way, Nimmi, an advocate of modern and western ideals, tries to be individualistic; and she exercises her freedom in a number of ways. This
differentiate her from other women of her community who are traditional and orthodox. Thus, she becomes a rebel against her own culture and tradition. Her rebellion reaches its climax in her romantic affair with Pheroze who is from a different community.

Nimmi detests the concept of an arranged marriage and prefers it to that of a love one; but she has finally agreed to get married to a boy arranged by her family. This is because her passion for a westernised way of life is unable to come in terms with reality; it has to be surrendered in the culmination of her affair with her Parsi boyfriend. This shows the hollowness of her ideals. Besides, her boyfriend who remains indifferent to the news of her arranged marriage, also belongs to the highly conservative community of the Parsi; and the community is no less than her Punjabi one in terms of its rigidity and conservatism. In this regard, Ramesh Chandha want to shed some light on the superficiality of Indian youngsters in their attempt to be westernised:

The romantic harbouring of such feeling, to them a sign of modernity, is clearly at the surface level only, for they readily accept their parents proposals and get happily married in the traditional style. Despite their best education and modern westernised thinking, they are still emotionally immature and unable to comprehend their predicament. This evidently proves that in a bid to appear modern they marriages, but the irony is that they have not been able to get rid of the shackles of their past or the traditional mores.26

On the other hand, Nimmi's father and her brother are happy in her marriage which takes place according to their tradition. This is because they feel that the marriage has saved Nimmi from losing her reputation and also has brought her back within the traditional fold of their community. Thus, in a way, the settlement of Nimmi to an arranged marriage may symbolise the triumph of
At the same time, the novelist has offered a consolation for the disillusioned Nimmi in her marriage for she is going to experience the kind of life she has dreamt with her future husband. In fact, her consolation has enabled to "achieve a delicate balance between the pulls of tradition and modernity." In a way, the balance may indicate the extent to which the conflict between the traditional values and the modern ones, has been resolved. On the whole, the resolution of the tension can be summed in the words of Aruna Chakravarti:

the community moves with a set of conventions that are subjected to periodic adjustments in accordance with the time and situation. The sum total of values remains almost unaltered even when considerable change is being wrought within the structure. The traditional is invaded by the modern but does not sustain defeat. The old can incorporate and assimilate the new, lending credence to the theory, that in India, nothing changes.

Whereas, in Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day*, the concerned theme is circumstances-oriented. Here, the intracultural conflict is imposed upon the heroine, Bim by undesirable circumstances. Bim or Bimla Das is forced by circumstance to accept the role of an independent woman who is also the householder of her family: when her brother abandons the Das home, Bim has to take the responsibility of their family. Moreover, she has been a strong character from the beginning; she used to grow up on her own as her parents have been indifferent towards the needs of their children; and she aims to be a heroine. She has been independent and bold since her childhood. In this regard, Ramesh Kumar Gupta adds a point:

Bim is the chief . . . . protagonist of Anita Desai. Her
ambition was two-fold: to be emotionally and economically independent.\textsuperscript{29}

In a way, the nature of Bim is also partly accountable for her acceptance of the role of a householder:

Unlike Tara and Raja, Bim has a realistic and practical temperament that finds an escape from her dreary world by reading history. This preference for cold, hard facts pervades her whole life . . . . Her leadership ability sees her through her life for she remains behind at home to look after its miserable occupants . . . .\textsuperscript{30}

Thus, in this novel the stance taken by Bim subverts the traditional values of an Indian society and its culture. This is because such a society will expect her brother, Raja to protect the family and become its householder. Moreover, Bim's rejection of the conventional role of an Indian woman by being an unmarried educated woman. But she has defied marriage and is an independent woman. Her defiance is an indication of redefining the role of women in the Indian society. Therefore, in this case, the resolution of the intracultural tension becomes difficult and open-ended. In this way, it differs from the earlier novel in which the conflict can be easily resolved. In short, in both the novels, the analysis of the said theme leads to the examination of some of the important aspects of feminism.
NOTES


