Chapter - V

Conclusion

Jhabvala's unmistakably unique stamp and impress can be seen in all the works reviewed. Insofar as cultural cross-currents and creative tension, positive or negative, are concerned, she has cohered and fused and effectively portrayed the resultant mixed ethos engendered by East-West cultural cross-currents. This ethos, more often than not, is one of the imbalance, engendered by misguided quests, fuelled by misperceptions of different, disparate cultures by both Indians and Western characters.

Esmond in India is a groundbreaking pastiche, having varied layers of parody. Therein, the cultural cross-currents and dysfunctionalities/malfunctionalities are laid bare in the case of protagonist, Esmond Stillwood and the neo-colonially influenced Indian elite, his coterie. Jhabvala portrays Esmond Stillwood as a scathing expose while the aging Betty is a card-board character. In terms of the cross-cultural discourse what Ruth Jhabvala points out is that no worthwhile dialogical relationship between two cultures can come about if the representative of one culture wants to impose, on the other, his/her own culture-determined ideologies. Through Esmond she is especially pointing out that a foreigner who has a dilettante relationship with the native culture is especially dangerous because through his superficial knowledge he find acceptability and subverts the native culture. Such a delegate is a foreign agent
or a comprador. Esmond as the brand leader and ‘ambassador’ of Indian culture and heritage is actually vacuous. His neo-colonial superiority reveals itself in the sadistic torture of his powerless wife Gulab. The upper middle class psychological and related material baggage is the focus along with superficial anglophilic manner and modes. Nouveau riche Har Dayal is hollow from within. Shakuntla’s affairs with Esmond cannot fill the void within her. The only relatively positive character is ex-freedom fighter Ram Nath, who yet suffers from an identity crisis. The Freudian concepts applied are relevant, employed to lay bare superficial anglicisation and hollow anglophilia wherein the cultural cross-currents are not creative but give rise to dysfunctionalities.

Judy is the protagonist, the radiating epicenter of A Backward Place. As anima, she is an exemplar of biological mother, hetaira and amazon with a marked touch of Sophia as well, despite unrealistic dreamer Bal. Her frustration over his idleness is quite often blinded by love.

Etta is a prime example of the eternal alien, the ‘prisoner’ in India. Her life is one of lustful hedonism with sex as the bargaining chip of material ends, her paramour Guppy (the hotelier) taking all in his stride. But she is yet a dogged and crafty survivor despite living in a self-created ‘miniature Europe’. A point of note is how unglamorous and simple Judy is fascinated by the aging ‘queen’s’ (Etta’s) toilette.

Clarissa, the third in the trio, has been on an ongoing delusional spiritual quest inspired by Romain Rolland’s The Life of Vivekananda. This she does chiefly
as a painter of peasants. But she remains troubled and bereft of spiritual solace, perennially elusive. Unlike Judy, genuine adjustment to India is beyond her reach. She, it can be assumed, would instead wither away in the face of the onset of years, but would still attempt to go about the business as usual.

Sudhir is Judy’s work anchor, who insulates her from pompous anglophile Mrs. Kaul. The Hochstadts have a superficial understanding of Indian cultural studies from the comfortable vantage point of visiting academics who do not have to go through the grist and grind like Judy.

Judy has a strong anima and animus as well as strong reality principle and polarity principle. But as the dutiful wife in her love for Bal, underscored by patriarchy, decides to get ready to accompany wastrel Bal to Bombay so that he can pursue an unfounded ambition as a film actor with ego-centric film star Kishan Kumar’s ‘aid’. So, at the end she is markedly insecure. A Backward Place may be considered a novel of serious intent with comic flourishes, wherein the sham of Indian social values is revealed as opposed to the affirmation of the individual at the end.

A New Dominion is a pastiche, a parody wherein Jhabvala disapprobates charlatan gurus. The search of three Western girls brings them to India who experience varied aspects of Indian spiritualism and culture and in the process they become victims of the said Swamiji. The Swamiji who is a Yoga guru suffers from the delusion that his teachings will be spread worldwide. But actually he is a heartless fellow, who is responsible for the death of Margaret,
rapes violently Lee and makes Evie mentally as well as physically sick who starts identifying herself with him.

This particular section of the novel receives major focus from Jhabvala. Though the narratology is objective, Jhabvala definitely critiques the Guru tradition. She does not tell about the family and socio-cultural background of these three girls, neither omnisciently nor through any flash-back, but it appears that they do not have family, relatives or anything and in their need to belong they relate to this animal guru, which is of course, pathological.

An important part of the novel is Lee, Evie and Margaret's entrapment by the delusional, grandiloquent Swami, a 'bhogi' not a yogi. He actually leads a 'lowlife', and lives by and thrives on exploitation. Lee, due to preconceived view of India and being misguided, is on a mistaken quest for Indian spirituality. Similar is the plight of Evie and Margaret. Lee is a ridiculous pastiche Western character. Yet she manages to free herself from his hypnotic power after a brutal rape. But Evie cannot; who becomes sick physically as well as mentally and as a result starts identifying herself with the Swamiji; Margaret who, due to her total faith in the charlatan, cannot see a doctor even though she has jaundice. Raymond and Miss Charlotte's efforts to take her to hospital fail and she dies in the end. Of course, all this has been covered in the main body of this work but repetition is necessary to underscore Jhabvala's condemnation of gurus who are too elevated in the Indian psyche. Indians, the author seems to
comment, cannot separate the wheat from the chaff. Blind believers, whether Indian or Western, are bound to suffer. Nevertheless, it is immoral and wrong.

Gopi's epicurean character is one of the cardboard cut-out, superficial anglophile without moorings, eternally fidgety and disturbed. He is indolent to the extreme, steeped in the illusory sensate experience. His hedonism is degenerative. His sexual encounter with Lee is transient even in its most remote aspect, which can be characterized as just a demeaning 'roll in the hay' for Lee. The Gopi-Asha liaison is pathological.

Asha has a false sense of status as a former princess, and instead of seeing life in its vibrancy, misses the 'colours and scents of real life's flowers', choosing figurative and metaphoric 'cacti' instead. There is a distinct problem with her mindscape and mindset insofar as the reality principle is concerned. She is self-tossed on a turbulent ocean of ephemeral desires. As a pastiche Indian character, Jhabvala must be lauded for creating her.

Raymond embodies the pastiche/parody mould as the largely stationary tourist in India. His relationship with Gopi is that of an elder brother. He is farcically and satirically rich in anima and yet portrayed as caring (overall in the pastiche/parody form). As a Western, his character is ridiculous, yet he holds the novel together. The tale is presented deliberately from distanced authorial rendering yet the commentary through action and character is telling. In A New Dominion the cultural cross-currents do not make for creative resolutions. The tension is rampant and the creativity is absent. Instead, there is the looming
precipice which ever hovers nearer and nearer to the questers, quite understandably as they do not know what they have let themselves in for and what is in store. This is all due to misperceptions and preconceived views that they themselves are unaware of what they seek. Raymond is spared as he is just the stationary visiting tourist with more interest in his neighbours than in gurus. Overall, *A New Dominion* is a pastiche/parody of high order.

*Heat and Dust* is basically in a journal form in which two time periods (respectively the early 1920s and 1970s) have been dissectingly explored. In the narrator's case, it is in a personalistic vein which intersects Olivia's experiences and era. The narrator's down-to-earth personality has been effectively and objectively portrayed. Authorial distance is a hallmark of the work, but it is rendered as two parallelistic separate journeys: one of the narrator, the other of Olivia. In the narrator's case the cultural cross-currents do engender creative tension and resolution, as she has a strong anima, firm reality and polarity principles, is not naïve, and adjusts well and austerely to the alien environment. She loves but does not swoon in passion (for the Nawab) like impressionable Olivia.

The Sufi strains employed in the chapter need to be seen as of contextual relevance. In this light the parallel incidents of the love and confession of Olivia and the narrator have symbolic significance in relation to the overall structure of the novel.
The Olivia-Nawab affair is one of glitter in Olivia’s star struck eyes. The narrator-Inder Lal liaison is one of the great fulfillment for the narrator and her sexual relations with Child (he forcing it as a ‘vehicle for self-realization’) are unpleasant. The narrator is a genuine seeker. Olivia happens to just briefly fall into quest due to blind love and passion for the Nawab. But her forcible abortion proves a draining experience of body, mind and soul. While the narrator finds culmination, Olivia finds the ghost of passionate memory, with possible bittersweet moments of reflection in her walled-in state in Mussourie, away from the Nawab. All this is because the Nawab’s family honour must be maintained at all costs, the very real casualties being the unborn child and her vivaciousness. The narrator’s and Olivia’s separate tales, yet with parallels, rebound on each other. The narrative emanates from the depths and heart of soul. The Nawab is a typical example of the authoritarian personality, due to his mesmerizing power over every one who is close to him, like Olivia and Harry.

Douglas’ marked colonial outlook speaks volumes on racism as he wants to remould India in the image of England, desiring and endeavoring to create an anglicized India of brown lackeys, hoping to perpetuate the colonial legacy. The Crawfords and Minnies have a colonial understanding of India. Dr. Saunders thinks India philosophy is profound but too impractical, yet another instance of colonial prejudice. The attitude of all these characters is effective from the historical viewpoint. In Heat and Dust two era stands and locale stands
are woven proficiently. They ricochet off the consciousness, deeply affecting the reader as the work has great pathos and poignancy.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala displays the culmination of a personal journey in which she has made tremendous leaps into both the Indian and Western mind underscoring the vital significance of conscious, unconscious. After reading and digesting the four reviewed works, one can see that she is both diverse and universal at the same time, as an author. This speaks of her commitment to her art and craft. She lays bare legitimate views within traditional and novel narrative frameworks. Her sphere of creativity is almost revolutionary and her varied perspectives are generative.

Jhabvala displays a unique sensibility to enhance the reader’s awareness of cultural cross-currents and their concomitant effects, which are both circadian and linear psychologically, to jolt the reader out of his/her complacency. Her art is thus an even culminating quest and critical justice cannot really be done to her. These should be viewed from both the feminist and Indo-Anglian viewpoints. She possesses both rare artistry and rare sensitivity. Her sense and rendering of the pastiche/parody is also extremely well-crafted. She has a unique flair for the condemnation of spurious imported values as well as highlighting the cross-cultural divide inherent in cultural cross-currents.

Ruth Jhabvala is affirmative of foreign missionaries such as Miss Charlotte in A New Dominion, the Dr. & Mrs. Hochstadt in A Backward Place and Dr. Saunders in Heat and Dust who in their quiet low profile provide shelter,
educational and medical services in worthy dedication to the indigent and the poor. They enrich the cross-cultural discourse in special ways. Perhaps, Jhabvala is pointing out through the strategy of contrast how different these people are from pseudo-gurus. Jhabvala fuses and yet renders separate, the Indian and Western realities. She has the backbone to do so without making any apology about it. This is the product of her own vast life experience and long, and arduous practice with the pen. For a feminist she strikes at the very core and root of patriarchy in an objectively distanced manner through characters, plot, and craft. For her, the veneer has to be peeled away and the reality brought out into the clean light of day. So, the points she makes are more strident (yet in a muted mould) than Anita Desai's as in *Bye Bye Blackbird*, an exploration of the immigrant experience which makes for apt comparison. The key points exposed in this thesis are:

(1) The blind imitation of an alien culture by upper class educated Indians takes them away from their roots causing the state of mess. Har Dayal and his family in *Esmond in India* are the representatives of such an Indian class. They are caught in the labyrinth and it is difficult for them to come out of that intricate situation.

(2) Western countries are considered as developed nations, yet some dissatisfaction prevails in the youth of these countries. Thus in order to find salvation, they are fascinated by the spirituality of India. But falling in wrong hands makes them more pathetic. They are exploited by fake Sadhus and
Gurus. In the novels of Jhabvala the Western characters who have some background in their homeland return but others are mere sufferers. Examples are Lee, Evie and Margaret of A New Dominion and Child of Heat and Dust.

(3) Lastly, there are certain low-middle-class Indians, who are neither wealthy nor have good educational background; they try to imitate the Western culture apishly as they want to overcome their shortcomings. Gopi takes shelter in Raymond’s house and in the process of imitation becomes a mere parody.

Since the novelist does not give sermons, it is worthwhile to isolate the characters who translate the discourse into positive action. In this direction, perhaps, greatest exemplar is the narrator of Heat and Dust, Judy of A Backward Place and Raymond of A New Dominion. These characters set the best example as they are not imitating the alien culture superficially, thus generating pastiche; rather they are imbibing and assimilating the foreign culture. It helps them to understand the Indian ways of life so that they are able to adjust here comfortably. Though Raymond and the narrator will go back to their homeland but Judy has completely absorbed the Indian life-style. This is the positive thing in these characters which gives solution to the problematics and leads to creativity.

Jhabvala’s varying perspectives are significantly and vitally unique. As such, her global place in world literature is well deserved and her works are definitely, in the researcher’s eyes, bound to stand the test of time.