

## CONCLUSION

Cultural confrontation is a common and an important scenario of the present time. Due to globalization human activities have spread across the world. People confront each other from different cultures. This confrontation has led to a number of issues that need our attention. Cultural confrontations are depicted in different forms. Literature expresses this issue better than any other form, perhaps R.P. Jhabvala represents such cultural confrontation in her works. So in this light an attempt is made to study “Cultural Confrontations in Ruth Praver Jhabvala’s Fiction.”

Ruth Praver Jhabvala has lived in four countries on three different continents. She was Polish-German by Birth, English by education, Indian by marriage and died in America. She has won numerous awards for her fiction including Booker prize in 1975 for her novel *Heat and Dust*.

Jhabvala had a unique opportunity of studying the problem because she got married into an Indian family and could study the problem of East-West encounter on the social level of friendship and she has also examined the problem through the marriage bond, which is the most intimate of all relationships. In all her novels there is a cultural clash of ideas, thoughts or ways of life. Ruth Praver Jhabvala occupies a unique place among authors writing about India because, she views the situation from inside though she is an outsider. She writes from the view point of a European and does not allow her readers to forget this cardinal fact. She is again and again reminded of her western values as they are embedded in her thought process. Unconsciously or subconsciously they keep haunting her in her writings. And therefore her novels are ironic and she remains a detached observer of all her characters.

When Jhabvala came to India in 1951, she held a very comic attitude towards Indian life. She has been objective in appreciating and criticizing India. She focuses more on Indian joint family system, where elders protect their children from every disaster. She describes how the Indian young girls ran after their westernized notions of romance, for example Amrita and Nimmi in her first two novels, and she also describes how they were saved in time by their caring elders, so she was very much impressed by the Indian joint family system and at the same time she also comments about bribery and corruption and patriarchal society. The entire fiction of Jhabvala in her first half of writing explores middle-class family life of people living in Delhi and their social problems, including clash between generations.

Her depiction of Indian life she shows considerable authenticity. Jhabvala has described the fashionable, swift and varied social life of Delhi by which she has tried to draw a lively picture of the modern Indian society projecting its silent features.

Jhabvala projects the typical India mentality, who runs after money and she also describes the Indian society where qurelling people, vendors advertising on tin horn and selling of betel leaves by paanwalas, are common sights in all streets of big towns. One can still witness the same urban scene now also. She writes about the furious social scufflings of present day India, and describes the head-on collision between the tradition and modernity.

In her first four novels she concentrated more on power relationship in Indian families, she shows the merits and demerits of this tradition. She praises the elders concern about youngsters and how the head of the family runs the joint family taking care of each and every person of the family, and at the same time she also comments on the

dominating power of the head that controls the family. Meenakshi Mukherjee holds the opinion stating about the contemporary India : as Brahminical India, which represents the quintessence of Advait philosophy and India at all other level is excluded.

Jhabvala in contrast, deals with India at the social, cultural and intellectual levels. According to Agarwal, Jhabvala is more concerned with the social realities than with abstract philosophies, and she is in tune with the western concept of the novel.

Jhabvala's position as an outsider herself has always made her highly conscious of cultural differences and influences, and consequently her novels and stories always force the reader to be aware of and even confront the cultural influences and prejudices the facts she exposes. This aspect of her writing is implicit and at times focuses attention on the East-West encounter, manifesting itself in her novels. Jhabvala's fiction is predominately infused with the themes like family system, man woman relationship, caste system, east-west encounter, urbanization, rise of new rich middle class in India, Indo-British relations, attitude of modern people towards culture, religion and education.

Jhabvala very vividly portrays the traditional Indian society in contrast with the progress in science of the western countries. Though progress is made on the technological field in India, the Indian society is traditional at the bottom of the heart. This is very clearly portrayed in *Esmond in India* and *A Backward Place*.

The problem of East-West encounter is depicted through mixed marriages and the resulting contrast between the two ways of living, as in *Esmond in India* and *A Backward Place*. In *Esmond in India* Jhabvala deals with the clash between the two cultures that are represented by Esmond and Gulab. Esmond hates everything that Gulab loves and vice-

versa. Therefore Jhabvala suggests that there is a basic difference between the Indians and the English. The marriage relationship between the Indians and English is unstable and likely to break in due course. Esmond's attraction for India as well as for Gulab and Shakuntala is temporary. He is simply infatuated by the glitter of external appearances. His relationship with both Gulab and Shakuntala ends in disillusionment. Esmond visits Betty whenever he quarrels with Gulab. This shows that he is homesick. At the end of the novel we see him making plans to start a new life in England. But there is no future for Gulab, she goes to her own people. This shows a very pathetic state of an Indian woman who is separated from her husband.

For that matter every educated Indian is a product of two cultures. He tries to copy the culture of western countries, but the culture of his own country is so deep rooted in him that he becomes a product of dual culture.

A similar theme is dealt with in *A Backward Place*, the problem of adjustment which, westerners living in India have to face. Some westerners have come to India for a short while, others to find solace and some western girls are in India because of a chance marriage. Judy is in India because she is married to Bal, she is of the lower-middle class, and comes to India to escape from the rain and the cold of her own country. Though Bal is hardly a suitable husband for her, she does not wish to break up her relationship with him. She submits to her fate and adopts Indian way of life and tries to merge with Indian society. In "Myself in India", Jhabvala writes that in order to live in India, one should adopt Indian attitudes, habits, beliefs and if possible adopt Indian personality. This is what Judy does in *A Backward Place*, though Etta hates Indians, she continues to stay in India because in her country she won't get the

same VIP treatment that she is getting here in India. Clarissa is rather philosophical in her attitude towards Indians and Westerners as she thinks that all human beings are equal whether he is an Indian or European. This sums up the different opinions of Europeans towards India and Indians.

In the award winning novel *Heat and Dust* Jhabvala portrays the attitudes of two Europeans towards India or how India overwhelms two European ladies. In the case of the elder lady i.e., for Olivia it is India under the British rule, her relationship with Indians is one between the ruler and the ruled. Olivia's personal relationship with her husband Douglas is not emotionally satisfactory. The clash of the cultures makes Olivia to take a strong decision against her husband and under Nawabs Shelter she decides to say good bye to everything. Her husband has failed in her duty to fulfill her physical desires. The clash takes place because of the east and western way of thinking. What a woman needs in a family is child and this is not understood by her husband who is in his dreamy world of ruling the Indians. His passion is exercising only authority. Emotional bondage has no meaning in his personality.

The last three novels are set in America, Jhabvala here has successfully combined the elements of her triple heritage - European, Indian and American, as was her intention. There are some similarities in Jhabvala's Indian and American fiction. First of all, Jhabvala's interest as an author has always been in human relationships and how characters behave in particular situations, and she has depicted it in both phases. Secondly, the life of the refugees -Punjabi refugees in Indian fiction, German-Austrian refugees in American novels, is beautifully depicted, where some of them like Lalaji of *Nature of Passion* novel and Leo Kellermann of *In Search of Love and Beauty* who start as penniless refugees and become very rich in the adverse circumstances due to their

inner capabilities. Next, the characters in her fiction have always been in search of love, beauty, inner-fulfillment and identity. Whereas Jhabvala's Indian fiction consists of guru figures, her American fiction has Leo Kellermann, the Rawul and the Master which are big westernized versions of those early figures. The western seekers in the Indian novels are again there in the form of their followers.

Through her American fiction Jhabvala deals with divorce, deceit and repentance where the characters have rapacious sexual appetite. Sex is shown naughty, ominous and violent. The novels throw light on the concept of marriage which is blown off into pieces and extra-marital encounters, openness of free floating lesbians and gay culture is projected as order of the day.

Jhabvala perhaps wants to highlight this difference of attitude between the East and the West towards sex. Sujata in *In Search of Love and Beauty* is a prostitute in India, even then she fears God and feels shame when she has sex with her son's friend Ravi. Whereas Leo in the same novel does not feel shame, rather feels proud in having sex with the daughter, Marietta of his lover Louise. In India, a married Indian boy wants to avoid thinking about his wife in the daytime as sex should be in the dark only, and in America, a teenager is so free to have sex anywhere and with anybody, as one is free to have jalebees in India. It is because open sex is a taboo in the Indian society. Jhabvala also wants to convey that it is due to this attitude towards open sex that marriages have doomed in the West resulting in the insecure and dangerous future of the children.

Some critics support her and some critics disown and reject her as another foreigner satirizing the underdeveloped status of India. Some critics consider her as an insider and some critics mock at her as an outsider with a screwed eye. Nissim Ezekiel for instance says that

Jhabvala's hatred of India is reflected in *Heat and Dust*, making her fiction a monstrous distorting mirror. He is of the view that Jhabvala's title for the novel is representative of her hatred of India and its climate. And there are some Indian critics who support Jhabvala in her description of India. N.S. Pradhan, an Indian critic dismisses Jhabvala's criticism as 'literary chauvinism' another critic Vasant Sahane says that Jhabvala should not be linked with other Indian writer in English. She is in a way unique and the advantages as well as disadvantages of her literary situation are particular to her. She can be detached, ironic and satirical, another critic Daisy says that, the image of India presented in her fiction is not to tarnish or degrade the strength of Indian people rather her intention are to expose the dark realities of our existence, vis-à-vis the world around.