CHAPTER IV
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Religion is an indispensable part of Indian social life where religiosity or religiousness is indistinguishable part of thinking and practice. Though it is not a hundred percent reality yet it is a very dominant quality. The composition of homes and family life is wrapped in religious colour. It is very difficult to separate the religious angle from the moral or the social. Due to influence of the European materialism there might have been a little decrease in the display of such tendencies in urban areas. However, the rustic life and the lower-middle class strongly hold such 'Sanskaras' wherever they are. Jhabvala is more concerned with the middle-class more than the poor or the elite.

Non-Indian characters are those who come to India in search of such values because they had either heard or seen Indians practicing age old "Sanskaras" and traditions of religiosity.

Though not of major importance in her earlier novels, one is still aware of the role of religion in Indian life. Westerners are attracted towards India not only because the East has a message to give but also because they are tired of
their material west, some of them come to the so-called holy men and women 'to lose themselves in order to find themselves'. They come to India in the hope of finding a simpler and more natural way of life. Hindu religion interests the westerners. Jhabvala slightly refers to Christianity and Islam but deals at length with the Hindu guides of religion.

Since no Mohammedan is presented in the novel, it is therefore implied that there was one religion Hinduism to which Indians belonged. The widows were attracted towards the Swamis who consoled them by citing passages from the Gita or from the writings of Ramkrishna. Married women had their Gods for worship in the niche of their rooms. Europeans did not have any display of the religious but it is implied they were Christians.

Jhabvala seems to have been influenced by the Upanishads, the Gita, and the teachings of Ramakrishna Paramhansa and of Ramana Maharishi. She does not spare a moment in Satirising the pseudo-religionists and fake Swamis in India. According to her, these were not always the followers of virtues and intellect or the embodiment of the pure spirit.
To Jhabvala, the places where they exist are seats of Corruption. Her characters of younger generation believe that “God dose not need temples or priests, the ringing of bell, the clash of cymbals.... He needs love and pure heart”. ¹

The titles of Jhabvala’s novels have received little critical attention, yet even a casual reader must experience how significant and suggestive these are. Her titles add critically and symbolically to the plots and themes of her novels.

The titles of her early novels, except The Householder, have been borrowed from The Gita, The Panchtantra etc. For example the title of Jhabvala’s first venture To Whom She Will has been taken from one of the couplets of Arthur W. Ryder’s English version of the Panchtantra,

For if she bides maiden still,
she gives herself to small will;
Then marry her in tender age so
warns the heaven – begotten sage.

In other words, the above verse says that marriage of the girls should be performed “in tender age”. Further elaboration is that the girls should be married before they are able to cultivate their ‘will’ means that they should be married before they are able to enforce their own feelings.
The title of her second novel, *The Nature of Passion* has been borrowed by Jhabvala from the Bhagwad Gita. The Central figure of the novel, Lala Narayan Dass Verma, is a restless personality. He is engaged continually in a restless struggle to increase his share of lifes material benefits. In short, the ‘rajasa pravriti’, the nature of passion, of Lalaji is the main theme of this novel.

‘Know thou Raja’s to be the nature of passion, giving rise to thirst (for pleasure) and attachment. It binds the embodied by attachment to action’. Pg.3

Jhabvala also quotes a passage from Radha Krishnan's comments on this aspect of the Gita:

The three modes are present in all human beings, though in different degrees. No one is free from them and in each soul one or the other predominates. Men are said to be ‘Sattvika’, ‘rajasa’ or ‘tamas’ according to the mode which prevails .......... while the activities of a ‘Sattavika’ temperament are free, calm and selfless, the ‘rajasa’ nature wishes to be always active and cannot sit still and its activities are tainted by selfish desires.2
The main emphasis in the novel is on delineating the process of ‘Rajas’ the worldly passion which is marked by thirst for pleasure and which Culminate in attachment. The ‘Sattavika’ (the saintly) or the ‘Tamasa’ are merely hinted as are the novel in the behavior of a few minor characters such as Phuphiji, Om Prakash and Viddi. It is the worldiness of Lalaji’s desire for money, his keenness to get Rs. 25 Lakhs contract for the new building of the Happy Hindustan Trading Company, which is an evidence that “Rajas’ fills the universe of Lalaji.

Get Ready for Battle also reminds us of The Bhagwad Gita, Vishnu has to follow his father’s business but he is unable to act independently. So, he should get ready to fight his own battle of life.

Esmond in India is a story of Esmond. He admires Indian art architecture and literature. He believes that in giving the lessons and lectures on Indian classical culture has found his ‘true vocation’. But he finds that Intellectual and aesthetic approach to her culture is no protection against India. But inspite of Esmond’s consciousness as a teacher, his personality begins to disintegrate along with his marriage with an Indian girl, Gulab.
The Householder provides its own frame of reference. The dominant Hindu view of life classifies the life of the ‘householder’ i.e. ‘Grihast Ashram... as the second of four Ashrams or stages in vedic life... preceded by the period of studentship, it is followed by one of retirement and calm reflection, and at last by the renunciation of all worldly interests. In building the novel around Prem’s experiences, Jhabvala demonstrates her awareness that ‘what is ludicrous on the surface may be tragic underneath.’

Prem is the householder who is continually obsessed by a sense of failure. However, he too indulges in the mode of citing ancient Indian scriptures. The reference to the four stages in the Hindu view of life implies a link between the life of Prem, the householder and the ancient scriptural tradition. However Jhabvala does not, rightly play up the Hindu tradition, she concentrates on exploring the householder’s economic, educational, familial and social predicaments.

Hans Loewe, a European youth, is a seeker after India’s philosophies and yogis and he asks Prem:

“Do you think a westerner like me can reach to the spiritual greatness of the Indian yogis?”
Han's is up against Maya, the illusion, and the concrete, this worldly realities of India simultaneously in this country 'where everything is beautiful, the sunset, and the fruit and the women, here you call it, all illusion! How do you say - Maya?'

A significant aspect of Jhabvala's ironic mode is that, contrary to popular belief; the West is shown as seeking the spiritual value of life and the east is presented as deeply involved in materialistic pursuits.

There is also a Swami in *The Householder* who preaches Vedanta, the need to say 'yes' to the call from within. Jhabvala's ironic thrust in other novels is directed not merely against fake Indian Swamis, but also at the European seekers of the spirit. Hans and kitty too are satirized effectively to expose their superficial enthusiasm for sounding worldliness.

"The 'backward place' of Jhabvala's *A Backward Place* is India" says Yasmine Gooneratne in *Silence Exile*, *Cunning*. Trapped by time and circumstances, one of the characters of the novel, Etta, calls the land of her exile a primitive one and declares it to be possessed of a 'primitive morality'."
A New Dominion or Travelers is a novel that contains four major characters who travel from Delhi to the holy city of Banaras and then to Manipur. The novel's title suggests the themes operating at different levels.

On the surface the New Dominion refers to a new India, characterized by what Yasmine Gooneratne has described as "an Indian Chauvinism that has replaced British Imperial arrogance". It is a novel about a new economic entrepreneurial India in which modernity creates new kinds of stresses within the patterns of traditional life and class position. Ronald shepherd thinks that, "A New Dominion" might refer equally to what Ruth Jhabvala has called another dimension of consciousness when westerners in India, exposed to another dimension........ to open up in response to it."9

Heat and Dust, as M.N. Sharma says, "provides a significant comment of the outward heat that repel and inward warmth that allures." The narrator of the novel views the landscape... "flat land, boiling sky, distances and dust, especially dust." The young narrator of the novel believes that one cannot live in India without Jesus Christ. It is only the prayer to that great Lord who can make one
survive in India. For this reason, Jhabvala lays great emphasis on the dust and heat aspect of India.

The title of *In Search of Love and Beauty* is also suggestive in the sense, that it presents a society whose members, despite the wealth and comfort in which they live, find little delight in life. They are all on the move, travelling in search of some perfect experience. 'Love', at its broader level is an attempt to search for meaning in terms of other human beings and 'beauty' is a personal quest to discover the truth for oneself.

It is the gurus, swamis, the temples, the chanting of hymns and talk about spiritual matters that have attracted Jhabvala's characters. The novelist has no sympathy with the younger generation of the west that turns to India in search of answers. She seems to suggest that often the shaven head, cast off clothes, beads, begging bowls and a set of high sounding slogans decide a person's holiness whereas, in India they are "sinners in saffron" and 'a sturdy set of rascals'.

The novelist has also mentioned about foreigners coming to India for spiritual peace. She has shown such western characters in most of her novels. Chid, Hans, Margaret, Euie and Lee one some example. But the novelist
is Satirical in giving the message that in the end they only find destruction of their being. She wants to convey that India is not for the Europeans because they will come here and destroy themselves because the atmosphere is not suitable for them. Some foreigners are the exception who try and adopt the Indian ways or they satisfy themselves in keeping their houses in Westernized looks. The suite of rooms occupied by the Hochstadts in a government hostel quickly takes on 'a very comfortable European atmosphere:' everything in Etta's bedroom,

"...was as it should be, the room was dim and apricot - coloured; her jars and lipsticks glittered on the white rosewood dressing-table; the flowers Mr. Jumperwala had brought still lay, elegant in paper and ribbons, ...... she had also put on a record and Piaf was singing La Vie En Rose."12

Jhabvala has not forgotten to mention the swamis in India. People go to them for solace and mental peace. She has given vivid descriptions of Swamis who are in the real sense working for the spiritual upliftment of the people. Corrupt people are also mentioned by her, who take the place of Swamis and destroy the life of the people by taking the benefit of their faith.
A New Dominion is undoubtedly concerned with an area of darkness, bound by corriding customs and superstitions, a backward place known for its poverty, heat and dust; a country much influenced by Swamis who themselves are sometimes materialistic. The Swamiji in this novel is quick to exploit other for his own, very material gains.

He would travel every, where by aeroplane and helicopter, and also multiply his presence by means of television appearances. (P.120)

In the novel Lee, Margaret and Evie are disillusioned and dissatisfied with the western ways of life and its mechanical society with a lust for materialism.

In the beginning of the novel, Lee travels to India, “to lose herself in order-as she liked to put it - to find herself.” 13 she meets Margaret in whom she finds a kindled spirit engaged in a spiritual quest.

Margaret, too revolts against her tradition-bound family, the pretentiousness and falsity of English middle-class society, and refuses to act her part as a bridesmaid at her sister’s wedding. She comes to India and looks to Swami for self-fulfillment like a dedicated spiritual seeker, given to
intensely questioning each experience of her life. Her concepts about coming to India are very clear; “People just don’t come any more to India to do good, those days are over. What they come for now is—well, to do good to themselves, to learn, to take from India.” ¹⁴ Swamiji becomes the cause of death of Margaret and ruin of these enlightened girls who came to him for spiritual guidance only because “for them their own personality [was] the most important subject in the world.”

Lee protests against the depravity and moral callousness of the Swamiji. She withdraws from the Ashram, a disillusioned person, and goes to Asha and Banubai at Banaras, to revive her individual liberated self once again. During her journey from Delhi to Banaras and Banaras to Maupur “Jhabvala’s detailed descriptions of landscape interiors assume symbolic proportions, turning these characters, into searchers of truth in the terrifying jungle of human personality”.¹⁵

Religious touch is given in every novel of Mrs. Jhabvala, Seekers of spiritual peace from the European countries coming to India for solace are piece of every novel. We find Hans in The Householder attracted towards India and its beauty. He is greatly influenced by India’s spiritual
richness and says enthusiastically, 'How I love your India.' He finds everyting spiritual and beautiful.

Prem to find solace takes the help of the Swami who talks of the peace and love and God. Many people go to him, sing songs and hymns. Prem feels relieved from his worry about the problems he is having in his life and thus is happy. Mrs. Jhabvala tries to bring out the spiritualism of Swamis and their help to give people peace. In most of her novels we find this spiritual note. She describes how the Gurus room was full of devotees, all tightly packed in small space. She writes: "The Swami had many visitors, people sat tightly packed against one another on the walls and some were even out on the Stair case" (p. 126)

Through her characters Jhabvala has satirized superstitions and orthodox views of India. Jhabvala showing the degradation of moral values among the Indians touches some wider aspects of society.

Jhabvala has tried to mock at the various old customs prevailing in the social set-up of the Indians. She has mentioned 'Sati-pratha' as savagery and barbarism and dowry- system has also been taken account of in To Whom She Will and Nature of Passion. The incident when Hari visits Sushila's family for initial approval is described by
Jhabvala very nicely, "Mr. Anand planted himself before Suri, with an air of great importance, put his hand in his pocket and brought out two ten rupees notes and one, one rupee note. "Well, Suri Sahib, he said, "your boy is ours, we book him, here is our money." Jhabvala's description of this ceremony makes the whole affair a business deal rather than a social function.

Bribery and Corruption take place in her novels. She has tried to project that the system is lacking the true way of life, some people does not consider taking and giving bribe bad.

Lalaji in The Nature of Passion does not hesitate in giving presents to the officers who could do his work that in other words could be called bribery. He says that it is such a simple idea to give presents to those who are helpful in the business.

In his words:

"Bribery and corruption! These were foreign words... Giving presents and gratifications to government officers was an indispensable courtesy and a respected civilized way of carrying on business." (Pg. 54)
Ruth Jhabvala tries to explore the importance and place of religion in Indian life. She mentions various kinds of superstitions along with ceremonies and rituals. She tries to show that God is worshipped under trees with faith Temples and shrines find place in her novels.

The novelist deals with the old traditional type treatment of Inderlal's wife. The narrator in Heat and Dust suggests psychiatric treatment to Ritu. She describes, "that day the screams broke out again, but in an entirely different way. Now they were blood curdling as of an animal in intense physical pain." Chid remained calm: "Its her treatment" he said. He went on to explain that she might be possessed by an evil spirit which had to be driven out by applying a red hot iron to various parts of her body, such as her arms or the soles of her feet." (P. 81)

She takes a lot of interest in describing minutely the superstitions and blind faith of Indian society. She has also taken keen interest in mentioning the poverty of India which is indeed an attraction for the foreigners.

Jhabvala is sometimes appreciative in describing the importance of religion and pilgrimage. She writes the narrators views,
‘Maji explained to me about pilgrimages, she said, “If someone is very unhappy and disturbed in their minds, or if they have some great wish to be fulfilled, or a terrible longing inside them, they go. It is a long long journey high up in the Himalayas, very beautiful and holy. When she came back she said about Ritu, “her heart will be at ease.”” (p.83)

The narrator again tries to visualize why the Western people come here in India though at the end they find dysentery and ringworms, “I try to find an explanations for him, I tell him that many of us are tired of the materialism of the West and even if we have no particular attraction towards the spiritual message of the East, we come here in the hope finding a simpler and more natural way of life” (p.95)

But Inderlal is attracted towards the West; “He says he is perfectly well aware that by western standards his house as well as his food and his way of eating it would be considered primitive inadequate indeed, he himself would be considered so because of his unscientific mind and ignorance of the modern world. (p.95)

Thus after visualizing the novels we come to the conclusion that Lalaji’s household in The Nature of Passion,
are more a matter of convention and respectability than of religious conviction. But a hint of something more occurs in *The Householder* when Prem visits a Swami and for some time finds relief and happiness in the sweetness of his singing and prayer, and in Sarla Devi we get a glimpse of true religious devotion. This aspect of Indian life becomes more important in the later novels and the treatment more equivocal. Certain recurring images in the novels imply that a conflict between forces of good and evil which together with a theme of quest for a spiritual goal, can be traced back in time not only to the moral literature of Europe but to religious literature of Asia.

Jhabvala tries to give her views about the religious people in India that they were not always the followers of virtues and intellect. She brings her western characters to India for spiritual peace but at last she conveys that India is not for the Europeans because they will come here and destroy themselves, as the atmosphere is not suitable for them except for the ones who have strong nerves. She has also mentioned the degradation of moral values taking place in Indian society and mocked at the old customs prevailing in the social set-up.
India for some two hundred years, has figured in the English imagination as a social and cultural experience, a theme and lately even as a metaphor of the universal human experience itself. Kipling (1865-1936) not only evoked the rash, self-confident attitudes of the English ruling class and expressed with uncanny fidelity and subtlety of insight and experience of Indians themselves as well as the unique quality of Indian landscape. At the other end of the scale from Kipling, E. M. Forster (1879-1970) representing the finest and most human spirit in liberal spirit began in *A Passage to India* (1924) the tradition of using Indian life as an image of personal experiences. There is also L. H. Myers (1881-1944) whose delicate and searching study of Indian experiences, spirituality and landscape in the lettralogy set in the period of the great Moghul, Akbar, is one of the most notable, if neglected, achievements of the Anglo-Indian cultural connection.

J. G. Tarrell, was another to use the Indian life and the Indian life and the Indian context to express in *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973) and *The Hill Station* (1981) a certain reading of experience. Tarrell writes of India and the British Raj and of Englishmen, particularly of English women, blending English sensibility and eccentricity with Indian suppleness and exoticism. Paul Scott one of the latest and
most able writers who located much of their work in India. India for Scott is a metaphor of life rather in the way that Malgudi is a metaphor for Narayan. But like Scott himself, his characters are not strongly defined, nor do they express that serene, coherent, personality which sustains Narayan’s fiction. Scott brings to India the fractured and fractions personality of the Westerner. For Scott, India is a lost paradise, a living illusion against which his characters defined themselves, their duties, and their moral values. For the British who lived here, India was an all-embracing experience. It is the Englishman’s India to which Scott has given density and animation; a feeling for the country animated by the sense the British had the rightness of their presence.

It was Ruth Jhabvala who, though polish, married an Indian, came to India, lived in Delhi for many years, produced a series of novels which dealt with fluency and understanding the problem of the middle-class Indians. She has sometimes been compared to Jane Austen. But her fiction is sometimes pedestrian. She is an expert analyst of domestic friction and the edgy differences of national sensibilities. Her long stay in India, her awareness and keen observation of the post-independence India, gave her an insight into this society, which is reflected in her novels. Her
India is not of the British Raj, nor is it the India of the rulers and the ruled; it is a free India of Indians. And that is what makes her unique among all other Anglo-Indian writers.

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Though Jhabvala is unique, it would be an interesting study to compare her with E.M. Forster and Kamala Markandaya, two of the representative Anglo-India and Indo Anglian novelists. E.M. Forster wrote much before
Jhabvala, and his India was the India of the Britishers, whereas Jhabvala's India is that of Indians. Yet we see the Forster's *A Passage of India* and Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* present the cultural clash between the two worlds of the East and the West. Both the novelists fail to create authentic Indian characters. Forster's Aziz and Godbole are a sort of parody of Indian characters and Jhabvala also in her turn fails to create that Indian ring in her novels.

Forster's novel lack realism and he attempts through symbolism to create realistic deals. Jhabvala, on the other hand, presents realistic details of Indian life and society. The reason could be that Forster never was in India for a long time and his knowledge was inadequate, while Jhabvala lived here for a long time and knew Indian society quite well. She was almost an insider. Although Jhabvala writes about Indian life in details she lacks an overall perspective, but the details are missing in his novels. Not only this, there are instances where Forster, due to his lack of knowledge, ridicules Indian customs and festivals. For example, he makes fun of Janamasthami. Jhabvala, on the other hand, never ridicules Indian customs and traditions. She takes keen delight in describing them. Another major difference between the two novelists is that Forster's novels, especially *A Passage to India*, have metaphysical dimensions, while
Jhabvala's novels have mainly physical dimensions and even moral values are nowhere to be seen. We can conclude by saying that the basic approach of the two novelists towards India is different. Forster has a sort of an ambivalent attitude towards this country - a metaphysical glorification of certain aspects of Indian society and also denouncement of a few others. Jhabvala's novels lack that subtle ambivalent approach - she either likes India or hates it. So we see that though Forster and Jhabvala are both Anglo Indian writers, their writings are altogether different.

Forster's India is the India of the Britishers, and even after they left India, he could see their influence on this society. On the other hand, Jhabvala's India is Indian's India; she didn't see British Raj here and could never trace the remainants of their influence on this country. This perhaps is the basic reason why it becomes difficult to see any remarkable similarity between Jhabvala and other Anglo-Indian writers.

Viewing the post-independence Indo-Anglian writers, we find a marked similarity between the works of Jhabvala and of Kamala Markandaya. Both of them show a deep knowledge of the female psyche. Mrs. Jhabvala is a Polish lady, who married an Indian came to India, while Kamala
Markandaya is an Indian who married a European and settled down in London. They have an adequate knowledge of both the East and the West. In their novels Indians and Europeans came together and face the problem of adjustment at different levels. Both have tried to show a way towards harmonious life. They believe that if there is marriage without love, and then there would be love without marriage. The main purpose of these novelists is to reveal to us our lives as a series of changing relationship with all the conflicts inherent in them. Both the novelists' depict-pictures of human life, but Kamala Markandaya seem nearer to the heart of India than Jhabvala does. In Jhabvala's novels irony often arises out of ridiculous situation and not from any specific viewpoint, but Kamala Markandaya puts the responsibility for human misery on fate that does not allow them to assert their free will, Kamala Markandaya, being in a foreign country, writes mainly for her western audience and this is responsible for her habit of explaining at length the native traditions and customs. Jhabvala has also been charged with the same habit in her novels. She can be counted in the same category, as she also writes in repetitious details about Indian families, food, dress and even Indian landscape.
Kamala Markandaya's foreign characters can be neatly divided into two categories. First, those who are friendly and sympathetic towards India, and those who show social arrogance and hatred to India. Jhabvala's foreign characters can also be divided into these two categories. In her *A Backward Place* Dr. and Mrs. Hochstadt and Clarissa are foreigners who belong to the first category, but Etta definitely belongs to the second. She hates Indian thoroughly, Indian food, Indian society, dress and even the Indian sun. Kamala Markandaya has both the categories in her novels. Dr. Kenney in *Nectar in a Sieve*, Caroline in *Possession* and Helen in *The Coffeer Dams* are not only sympathetic to India but are moved by the pitiable sight of the miserable destitutes of India. In the second group can be placed Richard of *Some Inner Fury*, a missionary who evokes hostility and is all the time conscious of belonging to the ruling race in India. *Clinton*, in *The Coffeer Dam*, to whom the tribal people are too barbarous, can be classified with Fred Fletcher in *The Nowhere Man*, whose fanaticism disturbs the peaceful life of Srinivas and makes him a victim of persecution.

Though there are a few similarities between the two novelists, the basic difference lies in the fact that Jhabvala is foreigner living in a foreign land and writing about
foreigners, while, Kamala Markandaya is an Indian, writing about Indians, though she is living in a foreign land. It is obvious that she can be nearer to her characters as compared to Jhabvala. Naturally the India, which Jhabvala presents in her novels, is India as she saw it and experienced it during her stay in this country. When we see the Indian image through her eyes we find that her attitude towards this mystic land changes at each step, she passes through towards this country. Initially she is under the spell of excitement and enchantment, which does not last for very long, but she gets over it for a short span of time and ultimately drifts into a gloomy mood, never to come out of it again. Whatever her last impressions are, we can conclude by saying that Jhabvala as succeeded in presenting a fairly panoramic view of this land of diversities and complexities, which has been appreciated better by her European readers than by the Indians.
REFERENCE:


3. Quoted by R. Agarwal, "An Interview with Ruth Prawer Jhabvala".


17. To whom she will, by R. P. Jhabvala, (p. 13)