CHAPTER FOUR

SPIRITUAL ENTANGLEMENT

Swamiji... is a fraud. His spirituality is only a pose. He is one of the hundreds of swamis in India who take to religion because they cannot find good jobs. The credulous westerners become victims of such swamis in their eagerness to attain spiritual powers.

(Ramlal Agarwal Ruth Prawer Jhabvala 67)

Committed artists do endeavour for the uplift of a society. They do not hesitate to mock at the false-pretences, social evils and crimes. Satirizing the follies and foibles of the society has been the writers' leit motif. In modern times, religion has become a subject of satire. Down through the ages, religion has been sought after by all sorts of people -- the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the wicked and the wise. Religion provides, in general, peace and solace to people at times of crisis. Human beings have their religious beliefs very deep and strong. Hence, they piously take part in all religious festivals and sincerely carry out all rituals. In order to practise religion, they need spiritual leaders and
gurus to guide them. Unfortunately, these gurus prove themselves to be spiritual charlatans, hypocrites and exploiters. They exploit such people who have blind faith in God and religion. This exploitation in the name of religion by the so-called religious mentors turns out to be one of the serious social crimes. These pseudo-spiritual holymen misuse their influence and also misinterpret scriptures. They pose themselves as demi-gods with supernatural powers. Most of the people are easily deceived by their outward appearances. Women are easy victims of exploitation, suffering serious damage to their womanhood. Women, undertaking spiritual quest, are ignorant of unscrupulous manipulators. They trust what these gurus preach and practise them. Many modern religious leaders take such reverence for granted and molest women under the pretext of spirituality. Writers are aware of this social evil and they do write about such issues with a view to reforming social and religious affairs.

As a sensitive feminist and a satirist, Ruth Jhabvala deftly handles the predicament of women, especially western women, who are enmeshed in the web of fake spirituality as in A New Dominion and Heat and Dust in the Indian context and In Search of Love and Beauty and Three Continents in the International context. She vehemently satirizes false gurus
in India and abroad, and sympathetically explores the conflicts and sufferings of women and their victimization. All the same, she does it from an objective standpoint. She realizes the significance of religion in one's life and how it is abused:

When life is so terrible, religion becomes a very potent force. It's all-pervading: there are noisy temples everywhere, religious chanting, temple bells, holy men roaming about, incense burning. People pray all the time, every house has a little prayer room that businessmen can repair to and kneel for an hour every morning before they go out to falsify their accounts. They do draw spiritual strength from their gods. [emphasis added] (Yolanta May 57)

But, at the same time, her keen detective eye spots the pretentiousness of the spiritual gurus. This observation makes her concentrate only on the negative side of spirituality -- the bogus world of the holymen. In an interview, she acknowledges her satiric attitude towards these holymen:

When I write about gurus, I usually write
about them in their false role... (Yolanta May 57)

Her aim in satirizing these gurus is to blend "a critical attitude with humour and wit... that human institutions or humanity may be improved" (William Flint Thrall A Handbook to Literature 436). She ironically exposes the spiritual emptiness reigning in modern spiritual institutions. One could notice Jhabvala's treatment of spirituality, though sparingly, right from her early novels like Esmond in India, The Householder and Get Ready For Battle. But her satire in the early novels is mild compared to her later novels like A New Dominion, Heat and Dust, In Search of Love and Beauty and Three Continents. These novels are, as Ramlal Agarwal observes, "peopled by credulous Westerners falling for the mysterious-looking eyes and saffron clothes of Indian Godmen, only to find that the eyes are not mysterious but blank and the saffron clothes are not a mark of spirituality but a mask for rank sensuality, greed, and crime. It is the leitmotiv of her oeuvre." (Rev. of Three Continents 164). As a feminist, her instinct to satirize becomes powerful and harsh while dealing with spiritual frauds and their atrocities meted out to women followers. This exhibits the artist's growth as a "natural satirist" (Margaret Laurence and Ruth Jhabvala" 207) -- approaching the society from a
feminist perspective. She deals with the sufferings of both the true seekers and the addicts of spirituality.

Jhabvala's portrayal of the swami occurs first in *Esmond in India*, where the theme of spirituality is treated in a much lighter vein. In this novel, she pictures the strong hold of religion on women through the character of Uma, Gulab's mother. Whenever frustrated, Uma, a widow, seeks spiritual solace from a swami, a traditionally-sanctioned and followed practice. She invites many holy people to her house and serves them with much piety:

The swami had come to the house nine years ago and had never gone away again. He had a little room to himself and his food was sent to him very punctually. Uma found him a great spiritual comfort. (*Esmond in India* 53)

Uma is contented in serving the swami, who, she believes would bless her in return. All the same, she is ignorant of the fact that the swami only enjoys and exploits her wealth by staying in her house. Not only that she depends on the swami, but also her spiritual dependence becomes habitual. She seeks in religion a way to arrive at any decision. Even in deciding Gulab's future -- which has to be decided after careful scrutiny -- Uma consults religious
beliefs. Jhabvala, here, presents ironically an Indian mother's strange belief in religious rituals. Uma "went down to the Jumna to bathe and how she prayed as she sprinkled the water! God surely must have heard her, she prayed so loud"(17). She believes that these ritual practices would save Gulab from her cruel husband. Initially, she fears that it is not possible for Gulab to leave her husband, but as she states, "after prayer and fasting and bathing in the Jumna I learned differently"(58). Hence, she comes to believe that God has approved of her decision:

For a whole day I prayed and I bathed in the Jumna and then I had reassurance from God that it is no sin... it is your duty now to go.(57)

Uma, Lakshmi and Gulab equally share their belief in religion, astrology, horoscope and fate. Jhabvala, through Ram Nath, the idealist, laughs at Uma's faith in the predictions of the astrologers. But Uma has staunch belief in it, as she admits:

You may laugh at these things, but I have had much experience of their truth and greatness. Everything is written in the stars, it is a very ancient science. 'Like the night without a light'; she quoted, 'like the sky without the
sun, even so the king without an astrologer wanders blindly on his way.'(129)

Jhabvala, ironically, suggests that Uma, with all her deep devotion could bring nothing good to the unhappy life of Gulab. She could not be comforted either. She sincerely takes part in religious activities. But it no way brings solace to her troubled mind:

Uma also talked to Swamiji, who read chapters, from the Gita to her and then made her sing devotional songs with him. She enjoyed the devotional songs and the sight of Swamiji, so holy and good, playing the harmonium, his eyes cast up to heaven and his mouth very round as he sang. But afterwards she did not feel any better.(175)

Moreover, religious principles have failed to improve her character. For, she often feels irritated and picks quarrels with her servants. Thus, through Uma, Jhabvala presents how an Indian woman has blind faith on religion and its rituals but never follows its teachings nor shows sympathy and love to fellow beings, which religion preaches.

In her next novel, The Householder, Jhabvala deals with two
men -- Hans, a westerner and Prem, an Indian -- undertaking a spiritual quest. She describes how spirituality offers an escape from their materialistic life. Hans Loewe, a German, is attracted towards the spiritual beauty of India: "Everything is so spiritual -- we can wash off our dirty materialism when we come here to your India" (The Householder 40). Jhabvala mocks at such Europeans. The cause that brings Hans to India is ridiculed. As he explains to Prem, he has come to 'this marvellous India' being directed by his dream, in which he saw a sadhu sitting under a palm tree and sending him the message:

'Come Hans'... Yes, only come, Hans. But it is enough. I take the rucksack on the back, I am here. (43)

He learns everything about Indian spirituality and longs to attain "the spiritual greatness of the Indian Yogis" (61). But he finds that his worldly nature stands in direct contrast with the essence of spirituality. "A westerner's nature is so that he feels he must conquer the world. Can I change my nature so that I can conquer myself? This is what I strive for" (122-123).

Hans learns that everything in this world is Maya and he hopes that his renunciation of materialism would lead him to
attain spiritual-fulfilment. He decides to follow the paths of the Sadhus and travels to the South, seeking a guru.

On the other hand, Prem feels that he cannot renounce all worldly things and follow the swami who claims complete surrender. He is torn between his love for his wife and his commitment to spirituality. However, his sense of duty to his wife dominates in him: "he thought more about Indu than he did about the swami"(79). At one time, he tries to identify himself with God and next minute he worries about his job and rent. Eventually, he finds that complete renunciation, like Hans, is impossible in his case and gives priority to his second stage, that of the householder. Jhabvala's treatment of the swami, in this novel, is free from severe criticism because men, as she finds, are less affected by these gurus unlike women seekers of spirituality.

Jhabvala also presents sincere female devotees like Sarla Devi in Get Ready For Battle, who never go after gurus. She gives up her family life and dedicates herself to social service, having grasped the essence of spiritual teaching: serving Humanity is serving God. In this novel, Jhabvala through her feminine consciousness projects Sarla Devi as an image of a true spiritual mother. She bestows a kind of sainthood to Sarla Devi. Brij Mohan, Sarla Devi's brother
acknowledges her sincere activities:

She is a saint!... For herself she wants nothing, only for others, always for others. If someone comes to her and says give me your jewels, give me your clothes, your food, the house you live in, she would give without one thought, she would strip herself of all. (Get Ready For Battle 125)

She takes sincere efforts for the uplift of the downtrodden -- for "all the poor with whom she so much longed to identify herself" (113). Jhabvala seems to insist that practice is more important than preaching. No doubt, Sarla Devi practises what she preaches. The motive behind Jhabvala's artistic creation of Sarla Devi is sharply focused by Kaveri Bose:

Jhabvala believes that having a strong spiritual belief with a concern for suffering mankind is very essential in India and this attitude and belief are portrayed in the character of Sarla Devi in Get Ready For Battle. (207)

Clarissa in A Backward Place resembles Sarla Devi, since her spiritual commitment also involves human concern: "I'm
not crying for myself. I'm not that kind of selfish person. What I'm crying for is human nature"(178). A Backward Place marks the beginning of Jhabvala's portrayal of the western women's attraction towards Indian spirituality. Clarissa comes to India "out of conviction and idealism"(20). She is so moved by Rolland's book, Life of Vivekananda, that she considers it as "My Bible! My Guru!"(93) and it is this book that spurs her to travel towards India. She wants to lead a simple life in India, "always up and about, that's me, wandering the face of the earth like a sadhu"(61). Clarissa has sacrificed her whole life in order to serve the cause of 'Mother India'. Her renunciation of marriage shows her commitment to spirituality, and it also exposes her desire to be free and independent: "I'm here, there and everywhere. Free as a bird,"(94) and "probably that's why I never got married"(127). Jhabvala, in Clarissa, presents a too 'unfeminine' type of character. She hates western sophistication. She has once for all rejected western values:

...my values are spiritual and not material like that of other westerners. Like Etta's, for instance.(128)

Unlike Etta, it is Clarissa who has well understood that "India calls for spiritual adjustments"(128). With this
commitment, she tries to identify herself with the spiritual India:

I belong here now.... I really think I must have been Indian in my previous birth -- in all my previous births -- well, lots of people have told me so and it's true. I know it is.... It's home to me, spiritually and in every other way. (155)

Jhabvala presents, thus, Clarissa's sincere dedication to Indian spirituality. At the same time, she does not hesitate to jibe at spurious gurus. Jhabvala, through Jaykar and Sudhir, satirizes a swami "who claimed to be travelling at God's expense" and another "who was caught stealing sweetmeats and defended himself by saying that it was not he but God who had felt the sudden craving" (57-58). Jhabvala also mocks at women who go after gurus. Even in her previous novel, Get Ready For Battle, she ridicules these women, which is voiced through Gautam:

How many of our women do we see hanging around healthy young swamis, they swoon with love and speak words of ecstasy to -- whom? To God? Or to the swami? (150)

In A Backward Place, Jhabvala sarcastically comments on
Bhuaji who visits a swamiji in a temple. The description of the swamiji and Bhuaji's absolute faith on his powers invoke much laughter:

Bhuaji... chose to sit near a holy man -- she loved such company... He did not look particularly holy -- he had a crude peasant face with small eyes and a large, spreading, small poxed nose -- but his orange robe and his air of freedom and leisure were enough to enchant Bhuaji.(88)

Not only that she gets cheated by the swamiji's action, but she also insists Judy to get blessings from him. Judy, a sensitive girl -- who has once heard her father calling such gurus "bloody hypocrites, the lot of them,"(64) -- feels embarrassed. But Bhuaji's compulsion does make her bow to the swamiji, though with much hesitation. The scene is one of mockery at Bhuaji and the swamiji:

Judy giggled. She was reluctant to go near the holy man and be touched by those huge, gnarled peasant's hands and she also suspected that his smell would not be nice. Bhuaji whispered to her 'Go, child -- you don't know what power these people's blessings have'.
Judy shut her eyes tight as the hands descended on her head.... His breath struck hot on her face as he mumbled his holy words, and she couldn't stop giggling to herself.(90)

Jhabvala's criticism on fake spiritual gurus does occupy a prominent place in her fiction. It becomes bitter in her later novels. Jhabvala happens to meet many western women who have come to India on a spiritual quest and who are finally trapped by spiritual charlatans. With this source, she authentically probes into their predicament. As observed by Margaret B. Lewis: "The figure of the swami has by now become a familiar satirical target for Ruth Prawer Jhabvala" (Contemporary Novelists 469). Her novels *A New Dominion* and *Heat and Dust* picture western women's search for gurus and their entrapment. In her last two novels, *In Search of Love and Beauty* and *Three Continents*, Jhabvala handles the theme of spirituality in the international context, thereby, arriving at a universal perspective of spirituality.

Jhabvala's satire becomes more poignant in *A New Dominion*, where she explores the victimization of three western girls -- namely, Lee, Margaret and Evie -- by a swamiji. Being fed up with their materialistic life in the west, their sense of homelessness and the resulting restlessness and frustration,
these western girls desperately move to India to seek refuge in Indian ashrams. Jhabvala's observation gains significance at this context:

Over and over again, I saw people coming there with their hearts and minds wide open... Some spiritual leader would fasten himself on them and exploit them. I met the Maharishi when he had just started -- he had this very black beard and very black hair and wily eyes. And lots of cosmic laughter -- at nothing in particular. He had already begun to travel, and a couple of aging European women had come back with him. They were radiant. They'd found a new world. (qtd.in Laura Shapiro "When East Meets West" 62).

Life has become almost meaningless to these western women. They do not want to undergo the mechanical role which marriage provides to women. Having understood the futility of marriage, they denounce marriage and question the rules of patriarchy. They yearn to evolve as individuals and strive to live for a cause. One could notice the traits of radical feminism in Jhabvala's delineation of these individualistic western characters. For instance, Margaret has come to India with a 'definite decision' against
marriage. To describe it in the words of Lee:

It was an active step of revolt against her [Margaret's] life at home and her family and what they and everyone else expected of her.... What really finally set her off was her sister's wedding. It was the usual kind of affair and we all know what they are. But for Margaret it was worse than just unpleasant, it was a catalytic experience which showed her the futility -- no, not futility, what's the word she used? -- anyway this nothingness in which everyone lived and to which she too expected to commit herself. But there she drew the line; that she could not have. (A New Dominion 38)

Like Clarissa, the three western girls in this novel remain unmarried. Jhabvala also presents how these western liberated women suffer because of their entanglement in new spheres of the world. This is aptly observed by Shantha Krishnaswamy:

The women from the west, here in Jhabvala's world, seem to have decided against marriage and family life.... Her [Jhabvala's] vision of
Europeans living in India is jagged with a tormented view of traditional taboos and inhibitions and a foray into new thickets of gay freedom, adultery, trial relationships and pseudo-religious cults. (326)

Having rejected marriage and family life -- the traditional roles as wife and mother -- these western girls embark on a spiritual quest. While their spiritual fulfilment remains a question, their victimization becomes obvious, as pointed out by Shantha Krishnaswamy:

Not one character in these... later novels remains pure or unvictimised. The old credo of virginity is entirely absent but the new freedom that the women, Indian and European, enjoy as liberated beings, as emancipated wives and daughters, the new level of honesty they boast of, has led them nowhere. They are faced with new problems, different traumas and a new set of puzzling dilemmas so that life once again is adventure like walking the high strung, swaying trapeze. (326)

Shantha Krishnaswamy may be right in her observation, for the western girls are not allowed to remain pure during
their spiritual quest, instead, they are made to accept sex as part of spiritual attainment by the gurus -- who claim complete surrender, both the body and the soul, of their women followers. Despite the guru's teaching that sex and spirituality go together, they could have remained untainted but for their exploitation. What Jhabvala wants to stress is that, though women follow spirituality with much dedication, as in the case of Sarla Devi, Clarissa and Miss Charlotte, the western girls -- like Lee, Margaret, Evie -- become helpless victims before the guru's cunning plots and hypnotism. Hence, Jhabvala highlights this helpless condition of women in this novel.

A New Dominion (1972) resembles in many aspects, the short story "A Spiritual Call" published in 1968 in the collection of short stories A Stronger Climate. One can assume that the plot of this short story has been later developed into a bitter criticism on fake spiritual gurus in A New Dominion. The narration of the story of "A Spiritual Call" centres on a swamiji's two western women devotees -- namely, Daphne and Helga. Similarly, the novel revolves around three western women followers of a Swamiji in Benaras. Added to a close resemblance among the characters, one could also notice similar situation and incidents occurring in these two works. Even a few words in the dialogues of "A Spiritual
Call" get repeated in *A New Dominion*. Daphne, in her humble service to the swamiji -- in taking down his dictations for the book *Vital Principles of Living* -- resembles Evie of *A New Dominion* and in her "cool and rational mind" (*A Stronger Climate* 101) recalls Lee. If Daphne feels as if specially chosen by the swamiji: "his smile had in some way been special for her" (*A Stronger Climate* 89), there is something special about Lee too:

... there he [swamiji] was smiling at her -- yes! at her alone! (*A New Dominion* 83)

The swamiji loves the company of Daphne rather than Helga, a woman in her thirties, so also of Evie rather than Margaret in *A New Dominion*. Both Helga and Margaret expose their jealous mind similarly, towards Daphne and Evie respectively.

The unhygienic condition of the ashram in "A Spiritual Call": "... rooms were all small and ugly... The meals were horrible -- unclean, badly cooked, and irregular... There were many flies..." (*A Stronger Climate* 90) -- runs parallel to that of *A New Dominion*: "There were many flies and mosquitoes, the kitchen arrangements, were inadequate, and the sanitary ones primitive"(81). Both the swamijis attract many female disciples. If the swamiji in
"A Spiritual Call" is "surrounded -- by women mostly" (A Stronger Climate 89), the swamiji in A New Dominion refuses to be a spiritual guide to Raymond, an American rationalist: "...I can never be your guru" (145). But, he readily and willingly takes 'responsibility' for his women followers. A swamiji with similar characteristics is also portrayed in "An Experience of India", where he is seen as "singularly unspiritual... who reaches a new level of viciousness, for he forces himself sexually on a woman disciple in what is almost a rape" (H.Summerfield "Holy Women and Unholy Men" 88). In these works, Jhabvala is unbiased in satirizing both the emotional attachment of the western women disciples to the gurus and the hypocritical attitude of the gurus towards them.

Unlike the other two western girls in A New Dominion, Margaret travels with a definite purpose in India:

...it's herself she's in search of and wants to get to know -- and not in any boring personal or psychological way but she wants to find herself in her deepest essence where she's not only Margaret but what there is beyond and including Margaret. (37)

She visits various ashrams and meets many gurus, "but has
not yet found the right one"(37). She feels "the stirring of the right kind of response"(37) from the place where Ramana Maharishi lived and died, but all she wants is a live guru -- someone to inspire her, she says -- snatch her up and out of herself -- simultaneously destroy and create her.(37)

Lee, like Daphne, is the picture of western rationalism. Hence, when they both come to Benaras and meet the swamiji, Margaret readily accepts him and surrenders to him, while Lee could not. Evie, like Helga has already been with the swamiji before they arrive. The novel narrates the encounter between these three girls and the swamiji. The Lee and swamiji relationship dominates the narration and exhibits, in detail, her victimization. However, swamiji's exploitation of Margaret to the core of death gains much sympathy.

Margaret completely surrenders herself to the swamiji and devotes all her time to meditate on her mantra. But her passivity is misused by the swamiji. Since the ashram has no proper cook -- for cooks keep on running away owing to poor payment -- the swamiji appoints Margaret to cook for the whole ashram. Excess of heat, smoke and soot inside the kitchen-shed increase her sickness. She deadly suffers from
hepatitis which is left unnoticed. Even when Raymond the swamiji to provide proper medical care at the right for Margaret, he delays it. Margaret, eventually, expires her death. Lee and Asha hope that Margaret has achieved spiritual solace: "Margaret had accomplished something, had gone all the way" (251). But no one realizes sufferings of Margaret and the exploitation of the swami

Like Margaret, Evie is also a humble disciple of swamiji, showing much respect and deep devotion to him. three years, she had been subserviently fulfilling her as a secretary to swamiji. Since the swamiji is writing book on the Essence of the Upanishads, Evie has to stay him all the time as "he's dictating to her bit by bit, as the thoughts come to him" (91). She is very content happy to be with him, for, "it's all she wants and all she really" (91). When Lee shouts at her about swamiji's treatment of Margaret -- 'Why did he tell her that? He kn she can't cook' -- Evie becomes very sensitive of criticism and replies in favour of swamiji: "The least can do is obey" (123). In fact, both Margaret and Evie spellbound by the hypnotic power of the swamiji. It is power that has made their individual capacity ineffect and has turned them to act according to the swamiji's wis
Even in her death-bed, Margaret refuses to consult a doctor, just because "swamiji doesn't like doctors" (161). Similarly, on Margaret's death Evie's mood is not one of condolence but bliss. As she expresses it to Lee:

...we'll go back together, you and I, won't we, we'll go back to him where he's waiting for us.... 'We'll go soon now. As soon as Margaret's dead'. She added in a joyful voice: 'How happy he'll be to have us back! He'll tease you no end, you look out. How he'll tease and joke! You'll see'. She clapped her hands laughing. (231)

Like Helga in "A Spiritual Call" who has "a taste for being teased" (A Stronger Climate 9), so is Evie. Hence, without attending Margaret's funeral, Evie runs back to the ashram.

Unlike Evie and Margaret, Lee possesses the western rational mind which helps her to view things with a balanced perspective. Her spiritual quest is serious and committed. She has come to India, as she says, "to lose herself in order to find herself" (10). She wanders from place to place "to become part of it and cease to be herself" (52). During her travels, she happens to meet Asha, a widowed Indian Princess; Gopi, an Indian youth and Raymond, an American.
While staying in Charlotte's missionary, she meets Margaret and from there they proceed to Baneras, to take refuge in the swamiji's ashram. It is in this ashram that the action and the interaction between the swamiji and Lee do happen. Initially, she feels 'exalted and purified' on hearing swamiji's devotions and singing hymns with him. But she could not surrender or readily accept swamiji as Margaret does. Instead, her inquisitive mind makes her observe and question the swamiji and his domineering activities. The swamiji not only expects his female disciples to pay obeisance to him, but seems to demand it from Lee: "You've never done that to me" (120). While Margaret and Evie could do it reverently, Lee refuses, as she admits, "still I couldn't do what he wanted me to" (121). In order to change the 'old Lee' into a 'new Lee', the swamiji starts misusing his spiritual powers and teases Lee:

...perhaps it was he who guided her or compelled her in the direction he meant her to go. (100)

Whereas Evie and Margaret, out of fear, tend to obey him, Lee develops a rebellious mood against the swamiji. Being courageous and rational in her outlook, Lee queries the swamiji's atrocities in a querulous tone: "You know Margaret can't cook....You made her do it. You bullied her" (126). But
Lee's plea on humanitarian grounds is left unheeded by the swami.

All he wants is to take complete possession of Lee. He would open her letters and constantly pester her:

You're glad I opened it?... Say that. Say you're glad I take all things away from you and do what I like and how I like with you.(128)

Under this compulsion, Lee becomes helpless and could say nothing but 'yes' to him. When Lee intervenes in the quarrel between Evie and the swamiji -- for the spelling of the word "transcience", which, for Evie is spelled with an 'e' and the swamiji with an 'a' -- he asks Lee to decide and answer in his favour. When Lee hesitates, the swamiji again teases her:

If you really love me as you pretend to do then how small a thing would be an "a" for an "e" to you....In real love the things that are thought to be impossible turn out to be not only possible but so easy... In the world of love two and two do not have to make four --
transcience does not have to be spelled with an "e" -- (101)

This exposes the swamiji's captivating tone and his hypocritical nature. Moreover, he wants Lee to know that she is being teased by him. At times, she indignantly retorts, but "his narrow eyes... both thrilled and frightened her"(101) and he cunningly plans to trap her: "... he knew her, knew how to deal with her, handle her, make her his..."(102). The swamiji's cruel mind gets revealed when he expresses his concern for Lee to Raymond. But cunningly he interprets it in terms of spiritual context:

I have to help her and guide her every step so that she will know that everything is nothing and also that she herself is nothing. Only then can she belong to me as the disciple must belong to the guru.... I want her to be mine. She must be mine completely in heart and soul and -- yes, Raymond... in body also, if I think it necessary. That is quite by the way only.(146)

The swamiji's attraction towards such rebellious and unyielding characters like Lee is well-developed in terms of fishing-image in *In Search of Love and Beauty* which is to be
exemplified later. In order to make her yield to him, the swamiji becomes an unscrupulous manipulator by adopting cruel practices like mesmerism and hypnotism. He sends away all his other disciples and asks Lee to sit in front of him and look at him. When she refuses, he grasps her chin and...

... compelled her to look into his eyes. She was aware of nothing but his eyes... they appeared enormous and glowed and burned with a supernatural power.... He raised one forefinger and slowly, slowly he brought it forward and while she watched it, in fear and fascination, he finally brought the tip of it to rest between her eyes. Again she cried out. There was something like an explosion in her mind and circles of light sparked and revolved within its pitch-black night.... 'Lee, Lee!' a voice called as if from far away, but it was his voice.... 'Why are you crying?' he asked....

He laid his hand on her small breast. He did this quite casually and as if it didn't mean anything to him. But what a lot it meant to her!(126)

The swamiji's mesmerism proves to be very influential on
Lee. It disturbs and changes Lee very much. Meanwhile, the swamiji grows too possessive of her. But outwardly he ignores her completely. As Shantha Krishnaswamy aptly observes:

Lee's relationship with the swamiji is a continuous tussle. While her mind veers away from his sensual and materialistic aspects she nevertheless, feels drawn towards him and is psychically disturbed.(325)

Not only Lee, but Evie has also undergone the same process. In her case, it has been a meek submission and she has kept it a secret. She begs Lee, "not to ask her any questions, she said she couldn't tell me anything more. It was something only between her and him, just as what was happening now was only between me and him"(185-186). Similarly, many women followers would have fallen a victim to the swamiji's cunning manipulations. His cruelties reach the zenith when he indulges in the sexual exploitation of his female disciples. When Lee visits swamiji's hut to demand explanations for his ill-treatment of her and plead justice for his injustices, the swamiji succeeds in sexually assaulting Lee, revealing the beast behind his religious robe. As a feminist, Jhabvala's sympathy is for the fallen victims and, as a sensitive satirist, she vehemently attacks
victimizers under the guise of spirituality. At this juncture, Shantha Krishnaswamy's observation proves to be an effective criticism on such spiritual-frauds.

The swamiji here, the head of the centre for Spiritual Rejuvenation is a disturbing study of an ascetic who uses his powers to create illusions of hope and bliss and claims wholly the souls and bodies of all his disciples. He has no qualms, either moral or religious, in abusing these girls sexually. He is a bogus godman and it is difficult to realise how even Lee, the more rational and clear-eyed of the trio, could fall a prey to him.(324)

Lee walks out of the ashram "wounded and torn"(199), full of rage and disgust for the swamiji. She meets Asha, who has been staying with Banubai, a Holy Mother – "an unusual person with unusual gifts"(117). Like the swamiji, Banubai also has the power of intuition. Many people seek her for guidance and spiritual comfort. But Lee feels that, "She's not the right person for me, that's all. I know I could never accept her as my guru"(202). Meantime, Lee is fed up with gurus and decides to live without a guru, resorting again to her free, independent life.
Lee's running away from the ashram seems foolish to the swamiji and in fact, he expects Lee to come back to him. He reports to Raymond that Lee "wants to do only half"(208). He seems to appeal for justice and reason and talks as if he were the 'injured party' in their spiritual contract:

We [Swamiji and Lee] are two people signing a contract together. It is signed and sealed.... Then one of the parties decides that he or she no longer wishes to abide by the terms. In such a case, is it right willy-nilly to tear up the contract, to say finished, I don't like it, go to hell? Is it right, Raymond?(209)

Revealing, thus, his hypocrisy, the swamiji is ready to accept her, and wants her to become ready for him. As he admits to Raymond:

She must come to me as she did at first; with her hands joined, begging for me to take her. And I will take her, and we shall start again from the beginning. But this time we shall go further, I will take her far, very far, right to the end if need be -- and this time, Raymond, this time there will be no running away.(209)
Surprisingly, Lee decides to return to the ashram and her wheel of suffering is set to rotate accordingly. The ending of the novel exposes Lee's inescapable addiction to religion. Or as Vasant Shahane questions,

Does the novelist imply that this physical surrender on the part of Lee is a part of her attempt at genuine 'merge'? (Ruth Prawer Jhabvala 115-116)

Though Lee exhibits "full of bitterness and rage for swamiji" (242) her final return to the swamiji seems to be inevitable in her spiritual quest. As Ramesh Chadha aptly explores:

There is an unholy alliance between the legitimate sense of realism on the one hand, and an odd spiritual desire for total merging on the other. Even at the end of the novel, Lee is incapable of distinguishing between simple, bodily pleasure and joy of spiritual merging. (Cross-Cultural Interaction 98)

But, this only reveals how even a rational-minded girl has been victimized by the hypnotic powers of the swamiji. As
Henry Summerfield observes:

The swami in *A New Dominion* is an unambiguously and monstrously evil character who is responsible for the death of Margaret and whose power over his victims reaches out beyond the bounds of his ashram to maintain its magnetic grip on another disciple ever after he has raped her. ("Religion becomes Political" 85)

Thus, Lee, Evie and Margaret become his victims and have lost their way in spiritual quest due to their entanglement in the cunning plots of the pseudo-swamiji.

While delineating the false role of gurus, Jhabvala is also aware of true spiritual devotees. In this novel, she underscores the service and sacrifice of Miss Charlotte, a Christian missionary, to the poor, the diseased and the desolated people of India. One can find, here, Jhabvala's human concern in portraying a western woman's altruistic service for thirty years in India, for as Jhabvala acknowledges, "To stay and endure, one should have a mission and a cause, to be patient, cheerful, unselfish, strong" ("Myself in India" 8). Despite many troubles, Miss.Charlotte
runs her mission. But when the government sends her the eviction order, she is not only disappointed but is much worried about the future settlements of the people in her custody. Jhabvala, ironically, seems to suggest that India has no room for such noble-minded holy-women but only for bogus holymen.

The theme of the intermingling of spirituality and sex is also discussed in the next novel, *Heat and Dust*, where it is exhibited through Chid -- a westerner turned a 'Sadhu' -- a 'Hindu ascetic'. It is again women who become instruments of exploitation. Chid, to whom the narrator gives shelter, depends on her not only for food but also for his carnal desires -- by admitting it as a means of attaining spiritual fulfilment. "In fact", as the narrator expresses,

he admits that this is what he is doing -- using me to reach a higher plane of consciousness through the powers of sex that we are engendering between us.(65)

Seemingly holy, he expounds his spiritual philosophy and makes people believe that "his sex is engendered by his spiritual practices, by all that chanting of mantras he does sitting beads in hand on the floor..."(65). It is pathetic
that the narrator is victimized in the exploration of his spiritual practices.

Having thus explored the victimization of women in their spiritual entanglement in the hands of fake holymen in India, Jhabvala, in the next novel, *In Search of Love and Beauty*, widens her perspective by exposing the duplicity of western spiritual gurus. If *A New Dominion* pictures the western women's search for Indian spiritual solace and their sufferings and victimization in the hands of a pseudo-swamiji, *In Search of Love and Beauty* also establishes the same theory of victimization, but this time, the locale is abroad. In this New York-based novel, Jhabvala deftly launches her satire on spirituality in the international context. Not only in India do western women go after swamijis but also in New York. Except for the change in locale, as Yasmine Gooneratne observes, the "swamiji's ashram", of *A New Dominion*, "parallels Kellermann's Academy, and the conversation of both men ambiguously combine both spiritual and sexual elements"("Apollo, Krishna, Superman" 115). The novel pictures four women's -- Regi, Louise, Marietta and Natasha -- search for the love and beauty of the soul and their entrapment in Leo Kellermann's Academy.
The novel opens with the description of the character of Leo Kellermann. The opening passage sets out the theme of exploitation:

Everyone always knew that Leo Kellermann had something, was something special.... He had come to New York in the thirties as a penniless refugee, but he had never really had any difficulty in getting people to look after him. That was because he was so talented, and handsome, and charming -- and young too, at that time; vital and young, so that everyone had wanted a share in him. (In Search of Love and Beauty 5)

These traits signify Leo as a pseudo-spiritual master, who skilfully exploits people -- especially women -- for his personal pleasures and benefits. His Academy of Potential Development holds more women students, because

...he had that wonderful gift of making each one feel... that he was in intimate contact with her, on the deepest and most thrilling level; and moreover, that he had absolutely no difficulty in understanding as well as condoning whatever secret, or secret longing,
she might be harbouring. (6)

By employing the film-technique of flashback, Jhabvala covers three generations of a German-Jewish expatriate family -- Louise, her daughter Marietta, her adopted granddaughter Natasha and Louise's inseparable companion, Regi -- who are bewitched and spoiled by Leo Kellermann. Kellermann, the name suggesting the irony -- Killerman -- destroys the lives of many women. As Margaret B. Lewis effectively sums up:

In search of Love and Beauty is a major work, coolly ironic yet not unsympathetic in its treatment of German-Jewish emigres to Newyork in the 1930s and the relationships which have evolved since then. Three generations are portrayed, and these wealthy, indulgent, and rootless Newyorkers search desperately for 'love and beauty', clinging to a guru who can teach them the point of their own existence. The gross and rapacious Leo is the latest in a line of suspect spiritual leaders who appear in Jhabvala's fiction and whose credibility is sharply questioned. (Contemporary Novelists 469)
Jhabvala's expatriate sensibility finds expression in this novel along with spirituality, through the delineation of these German-Jewish refugees. Louise has grown up in a suburb of the town of D-in Germany. Critics relate D-probably, to Dresden, a town similar to Cologne, Jhabvala's birth place. At eighteen, Louise falls in love with Bruno Sonnenblick, a Jew of thirtysix. The novel begins with Leo intruding in the life of Regi, who is married "already twice, and twice divorced"(36) and through Regi, Leo is introduced to Louise. Both Regi and Louise have been searching for spiritual comfort to escape from their expatriate sensibility and Leo's Academy provides them an escape. They are attracted towards his theories which involve psycho-spiritual exercises. They financially support him to establish his Academy. They provide their own house for his physical expression classes and theoretical classes. His concept of teaching include demonstration and illustration of passion: "One day it might be Jealousy, or Wrath, or merely Irritability, another Love. It was discussed, expounded on, at Louise's, and then at Regi's it was acted out"(36). Like the swamiji of A New Dominion, Leo has his own way of mesmerizing people. His evolution of a life-philosophy has culminated in The Point, which has been the climax of all his experiences, experiments and all his
mental and physical exercises. The point carries a double meaning:

... it was both the point of human life -- its goal -- and also the point of intersection where its highest attainment, by which he meant its highest experiences, met.(131)

Jhabvala's satire becomes more poignant while expounding Leo's teachings, which resemble that of the swamiji's in A New Dominion and Chid's in Heat and Dust. Leo preaches that it is through the highest human experience on the physical plane -- the orgasm of the body -- that one can attain the highest human experience on the spiritual plane -- the orgasm of the soul. He stresses that there is a Point to be reached: "A Point of intersection of both our highest points, and that's what it's all about! That's The Point. To be reached. By all of us."(131-132). Thus, his teaching is essentially about the intermingling of the spiritual and sexual elements.

The spiritual seekers like Louise and Regi are made to accept, like Lee, sex as part of their spiritual quest. In fact, they could not distinguish between sex and spirituality. For, such is the odd mixture of Leo's psycho-
spiritual philosophy. It is a pity that these women are badly exploited by the fake spiritual guru. Louise and Regi offer continually their financial support to Leo out of their commitment to spirituality. But Leo cunningly presumes on their wealth as well as their beauty. Though, at times, Louise realizes that she is being exploited by him, she could not stop giving money to him whenever it is demanded. For, he even teases and tortures her to extract money from her: "He [Leo] liked sometimes to tease, sometimes to bully it out of her"(89). In such circumstances, women become helpless victims.

If in his thirties, Leo manipulates women thus -- 'with his luck of the devil', in his sixties and seventies he redoubles his deception and pretension and exploits women like Marietta, Stephanie and Natasha. Though Leo as Yasrine observes, is "a charismatic 'genius' of mysterious European origins with whom both Louise and Regi are deeply in love, and the others seemingly inescapably involved" ("Apollo, Krishna, Superman" 111), the pretentiousness of his Academy is revealed when many people keep running away from it. In fact, he himself is a man of paradox: "...he was vain, greedy, and worldly" (In Search of Love and Beauty 73) and an alcoholic too. Apart from being an introvert, he is
gifted with an instinct "to look deeply into others and see what was going on there" which is "something extraneous to his own personality which he himself acknowledged to be that of a monster egotist" (73).

Marietta, though she repels Leo's monstrous activities, could not escape from his amorous advances. He keeps constantly persuading her. For, he loves people who resist him most. He enjoys it like fishing. As he admits:

It's like fishing... It's no fun unless the fish resists; unless it struggles -- flaps and fights and wriggles for its life until -- yupp! you've got it: up in the air where you want it, dangling there, with all your hook, line and sinker inside it. (21)

This image of 'fishing' becomes significant in Leo's exploitation of women -- recalling the exploitation of women by spiritual gurus in general, especially that of Lee in A New Dominion. Leo tends to use this image "for both his sexual and his spiritual conquests" (21). Through this imagery of fishing, Jhabvala effectively captures the helpless condition of women and also satirizes the urge of the spiritual gurus to molest innocent women. The scene in
which Marietta experiences her sexual encounter with Leo is one of betrayal. On Louise's sixtieth birthday party, when all are waiting to blow the candles out, Marietta, who "did her best to ignore everything to do with him [Leo]"(21), shuts herself in a room. Leo takes the advantage of her loneliness and spoils her. Marietta, though she detests Leo more than anyone else in the world and tries to avoid him, is finally trapped by him.

Marietta's disgust for Leo has developed in her even from her young age, when her father has been cuckolded by Leo, in their own house. On one such occasion, she just announces her mother: "I'm going to marry Tim and I shall never forgive you"(8). Added to this, her personal life has also become distressful. Her marriage with Tim, an American proves disastrous -- Tim is an alcoholic, one of his sisters mentally retarded, the other a lesbian and his father a suicide. Hence disappointed by Tim and his family, Marietta breaks her marital bond with him, after the conception of Mark. After Mark's birth, she adopts Natasha, a war orphan, probably a Jew, in order to keep up her lineage. But unlike her mother, Marietta does not involve herself in a serious spiritual quest to overcome her frustrations. Occasionally, out of enthusiasm, she visits a few ashrams in India and the
gurus somehow, remind her of Leo. Further more, "everytime she visited an ashram she got some infection; so she stopped going"(25). Instead, she emerges as a new woman taking up trading-business. She travels yearly to India to export Indian fabrics and handicrafts for her fashion house. Jhabvala, here, presents an ultra-modern woman entering into trading-business and leading an independent life.

In his escapades, Leo never spares even very young girls. Stephanie, a young girl, is one of his favourite students in the Academy. He falls in love with her. He is often found chasing her and dancing with her. She becomes a puppet in the hands of Leo. Many young girls are caged by Leo at his 'cosy, masculine den' during night for his experiments. Stephanie is one such who is often called by Leo. He would arouse her emotionally and when she laughs at his huge body -- of an 'insufferable weight'-- he would roll off her, for, her laughing is taken by Leo as a sign of fooling him. Later, he would explain it to her that

...the whole thing had been a test: not for her but for himself, to ascertain whether he could withstand the temptation of a young girl beside him. (55-56)
Similarly, he would call her on several nights and she would laugh and he would kick her out. If Stephanie has been thus bodily exploited by Leo, Natasha, who is a lonely, "serious and introverted child, inordinately sensitive to the sufferings of others" (Laurie Sucher 174), has been manually exploited by him. Leo allots her a lot of secretarial work in the Academy office. Though Natasha is very hardworking, she "couldn't do secretarial work; Leo would get angry and yell at her whenever she bungled something, which would be often"(43). Her attachment to Leo is slave-like. She loves Mark passionately. She comforts him. Unlike Marietta, she rightly guesses about his homosexuality. Critics find this observant little Jewish girl as Ruth Jhabvala's persona in the novel, in expressing an overwhelming "pity for all the hungers of Humanity"(15). She realizes that the world is an illusion. She is quite sensible and different from the other disciples of Leo. As Laurie Sucher rightly observes:

Natasha differs from the denizens of the Academy in that she looks to her own resources. Quiet and contemplation show her 'love and beauty' in contrast to the disciples' fervent soul-searching, she is the only one among them, who does not 'sigh and confess at night', who instead lies down 'with
a light and happy heart as if she had done a
great day's work.'(193)

But the other women have misplaced their love and interest
in false gurus and each one of them "in search of love and
beauty, and in the course of this quest had recklessly
entangled herself in one harmful liaison after the
other"(137).

The climax of the novel pictures the fatal-end of the major
characters. Stephanie elopes with Jeff, who disbelieves Leo
and his Academy. Leo picks up Natasha and goes in search of
Stephanie in order to hold her from elopement. But Natasha
assumes that Leo is taking her to the Academy where Regi's
sixty-fourth birthday is to be celebrated. Owing to heavy
mist and the loss of the head-light in his car, Leo finds it
difficult to drive. Hence, it is evidently suggested that
Natasha is innocently dragged to death. Yasmine aptly sums up:

As the founder of a grandiose 'Academy of
Potential Development', Kellermann is a fit
subject for his creator's satire; ... and
Kellermann ends the book with Natasha beside
him to share a despair more dreadful than any
to which he has dispatched his helpless victims. ("The Making of an American Superman" 12)

In the Academy, Regi in a playful mood gives a gentle push to Louise. She falls down and it becomes fatal to her. She dies by crying out "I'm coming!" (188). This utterance -- 'I'm coming' occurs at three places in the novel. Marietta has, once heard Louise uttering it for the first time, "when she had watched her and Leo from behind the screen" (188). The second one has been Merietta's reply to Mark's calling, when she has her sexual encounter with Leo on her mother's birthday. The third one is again repeated by Louise as she dies. Marietta recollects Louise's past utterance and wonders, "What's she mean? Where's she coming? Where's she going?" (188). Hence this utterance seems to suggest that Louise's death is essentially a spiritual transcendence. As Laurie Sucher points out:

... twice the reference is sexual, and comic. But the third time the words are uttered by Louise as she dies, and they clearly equate, by the repetition, eros and spiritual transcendence, that is, the soul's departure from the body at death. (192)
If Leo's philosophy centres on 'eros and spiritual transcendence', the Rawul's philosophy in Jhabvala's latest novel, Three Continents, revolves around 'Transcendental Internationalism' or The Fourth World Movement -- a movement for world unity. As the title suggests the novel sweeps across three continents -- America, London and India -- covering the activities of this quasi-religious movement in all these places. Jhabvala's intention to combine her three backgrounds in this novel, is to satirize the shortcomings of all the three cultures, which she is familiar with. But, her target of satire is aimed only at pseudo-religious people who try to materialize and politicise their movement. As a feminist, Jhabvala presents how a young girl is ruthlessly exploited by the people of this movement, in order to seize her wealth and property.

The theme of escape from a sense of homelessness is also discussed in Three Continents. Harriet, the narrator of this novel and her twin brother suffer from rootlessness and "restlessness, or dissatisfaction with America"(11). Jhabvala, here, points out the degradation of American culture. Harriet's parents are divorced. Her father marries another woman Lindsay, her mother and Jean an excellent
businesswoman have "settled down together as a more or less married couple" (24). Both Harriet and Michael have inherited much wealth from their maternal grandparents. Fed up with their materialistic life, they have been searching for -- 'the Om, the real thing'. As Harriet admits:

While our parents were having marital squabbles and adulterous love affairs and our grandparents were giving diplomatic cocktail parties, he and I were struggling with the concepts of Maya and Nirvana, and how to transcend our own egos. (17)

In their quest for truth, Harriet and Michael wish to attach themselves to any activity or movement. But unfortunately, they are caught up with a quasi-religious group, and its leaders. This entrapment is well observed by Henry Summerfield:

In Three Continents revulsion from a society of easy divorce, frequent changes of partner, and rootless children becomes as important a theme as falling into the hands of false teachers. (80)

Having projected the hypocrisy and manipulation of a religious guru in A New Dominion and a psychological guru in
In Search of Love and Beauty, Jhabvala, in this novel, takes up for treatment the false-pretences of a political guru. As Henry Summerfield enunciates:

In *Three Continents*, the natures of the political guru and his aides are slowly revealed, and not till the end of the book is it shown how deeply the Rawul is implicated in the corruption of his movement for world unity. (82-83)

Seizing the opportunity of Michael's invitation, the fake practitioners of the Fourth World Movement -- the Rawul, its founder; Rani, his official consort and Crishi, their adopted son -- arrive at his estate house, the "Propinquity" and occupy the whole house with people and activity. Michael has come across the Rawul and others in India and gets so involved with them that he "wanted to give his life for them and their cause"(12). But to Harriet, the Rawul and his entourage seem "neti: not right, not Om,... not the real thing"(22). On knowing the twin's rich inheritance, the Rawul's group cunningly plan to take 'complete possession of the house', by turning it into their organizational headquarters. Towards the end they also resort to politics to
propagandize their movement, as the Rawul desires:

He was forming an independent political party in opposition to the ruling party, which he intended one day to defeat, and from this base, with real political power in his hands, he could work outward toward his great ideal -- that is, from ruling India he could advance to uniting the world. (288)

Jhabvala, in this novel, presents not only the hypocrisy of a political guru, but also the younger generation inheriting the corrupted leadership from old gurus. Crishi, an Indian, is pictured only as the young version of Leo Kellermann of *In Search of Love and Beauty*. Like Leo, Crishi is in need of financial support to set right the physical base of the movement. The Rawul becomes almost a guide to him, working from behind. Crishi grows ever ambitious and greedy to own the wealth of the twins. In fact, he has moved intimately with Michael in India only to fulfill his selfish motive, which stands in juxtaposition with Michael's and Harriet's motive to dedicate their lives and property for a noble cause. Crishi starts persuading Harriet to achieve his goal:

...don't think it's all phony; all neti....The Rawul really is a ruler and from a dynasty
older than any other in the whole world. It's true. (34)

Crishi also lures Harriet into his villainous trap. Like other spiritual leaders, Crishi, as Harriet feels, does possess an alluring power:

... whenever Crishi appeared; the same shock - I would say thrill except that word isn't physical enough to express the sensation he induced, as of a live electric wire suddenly coming into contact with an innermost part of one's being". (16)

Not knowing the ignoble activities that the Rani and Crishi try to hide behind the facade of the movement, the innocent Harriet falls in love with Crishi. The intrusion of Crishi in Harriet's life shatters the twin relationship -- the shared ideal status of Harriet and Michael. The twins, who have so far 'felt as with one body', now feel separated from each other. As Jennifer Livett aptly points out:

Harriet's mental attachment to Michael is usurped by her sexual bond with Crishi. As she gets closer to him, she moves further in every way from all her family, and is forced into a
'nonattachment' very different from the twins' earlier intentions. (70)

Both Michael and Harriet, the seekers of Eastern spirituality are so captivated by the charismatic charm of Crishi, that they are unaware of the falsities of the movement. Taking their generosity for granted, Crishi tries to take complete rule over Harriet. One could also notice even his compulsion on her, which is revealed, as Jennifer Livett finds, when he "forces her to run races with him long after she wishes to stop and her ankle is hurting, suggesting similar compulsions and pain in the marriage which is to follow" (70). No sooner do the Rawul and Rani come to know of Crishi and Harriet courtship than they arrange marriage between them. As Feroza Jussawala aptly finds: "The goal is plain and clear: to obtain all the money" (91). But the Rawul cunningly announces Harriet's union with Crishi as "a symbol of the synthesis that was the heart of his movement" (143). The Rawul, who is keen on publicity, considers their marriage as a publicity event. But ignorantly Harriet admits: "... our marriage was not only a personal but also an historic celebration" (148). In fact, their marriage remains only a celebration, devoid of marital bliss. Added to this, Harriet's marriage with Crishi changes her altogether as a slave. This is well observed by Henry
Summerfield:

Harriet, who has shunned the sexual adventures of other young girls, is deflowered by Crishi and becomes sexually enslaved to him, consenting to share him with others even after she has married him, and ignoring the warning of Jean, her mother's clear-sighted lover, that he is a fortune-hunter. (82)

Here, it may tempt one to picture Harriet as more sensual and that her marriage is based on infatuation. But after scrutiny, it will only prove to be an assumption and one would disapprove of it, as does Feroza Jussawala:

Sex seems to be all she wants from Crishi, but we are never permitted to see her as a sex-craved nymphomaniac who goes to great distances (all the way to Dhoka) for her sex. No. She is ever the innocent American deceived by the experienced and corrupt Indian! [emphasis mine] (91)

As a feminist, Jhabvala expresses all her softness and sympathy for Harriet. Harriet's marriage proves ill-fated. She is disappointed with Crishi who spends most of his time
with Rani and Anna Sultan, the journalist, under the pretext of the development and organization of the movement. Harriet is left alone to ponder over her depression. It is true that Harriet cherishes the ideals of the movement, but is disillusioned with its activities which involves corruption and smuggling. It is in England that Crishi and other followers of the movement start indulging more in smuggling activities. Besides plotting on the twin's property, they also force Michael to involve in the smuggling business, especially drugs. Jhabvala satirizes the bad motive of the people of Rawul's group, who are prepared to earn money by hook or by crook to establish the movement. Some of the followers are caught redhanded and immured while some like Paul are ruthlessly forced and kicked by Crishi to imprisonment. Finally, in order to escape from the British police and their inquiries, the group secretly plans to return to the third continent, that is, to Dhoka -- 'their breeding ground' in India.

It is a pity that the innocent Harriet is not aware of Crishi's cunning plots. Crishi plays skilfully in his endeavour. He never gives the letters addressed to Harriet from her family members, warning her not to get involved in their movement anymore and not to sign anything to donate
Propinquity. Crishi's words to Harriet -- "You don't mind, do you, that I've been opening your letters?"(192) -- reminds one that of the swamiji's to Lee in A New Dominion. When Crishi says, "I wouldn't have married you without it -- without the money..."(225), Harriet is pitiably helpless.

In India, when Harriet comes to know of the criminal mind of the Bhais -- the Indian group involved in the movement, it becomes too late for her to withdraw herself and Michael from it. But she loses interest in the Movement. Hence, Crishi fears that they would return to America leaving him without any money or property. When it is reported to Harriet that Michael has been murdered and that she has been assigned the sole inheritance of the property, it is only suggestive of Crishi murdering Michael, "the ready material for the vultures of spirituality" (Rekha Jha The Novels of Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Jhabvala 81). The news shocks Harriet and the villainous Crishi consoles her. Thus, the Rawul and Crishi prove themselves to be successful exploiters and the twins fall victims to disinheritance.

As a sensitive feminist, Jhabvala has responded to the contemporary problem of women -- by picturing the universal condition of victimization of women in their spiritual
entanglement, and by satirizing the world of hypocrisy and corruption of the pseudo-religious gurus. In a way all these women seekers of spirituality seem to echo what Katie observes in "How I Became a Holy Mother": "I didn't like the bitchy atmosphere, and that swamiji was a big fraud, anyone could see that" (How I Became a Holy Mother 138). Whether they are Indian swamijis or American spiritual leaders, they cunningly exploit and mislead women by all means. The author has projected the issue with an artistic expression by adopting unique techniques, which is to be highlighted in the concluding chapter.