

## Reimagining Social Predicament of Indian Cultural Ethos : A study of Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust*

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### **Abstract**

*India always remains an important part of Jhabvala's fictional world whether she presents India as rich cultural heritage or depicts the East-West encounter. She writes negatively about India especially while portraying Indian pretentious 'Swamis' and 'gurus' but she simultateneously praises the simplicity, beauty and true love of Indians and this underlying current of her love for India and Indians cannot be ignored. As a fiction writer, Jhabvala seeks three kinds of reality like cultural reality, spiritual reality and social reality which she has presented very authentically in her works.*

*Jhabvala's society, her characters and situations are real in themselves. Her novels, thus, project a lively image of India, the details of which both reflect and imply her passionate concern with the social reality of India. She observed India with faith in Indian culture but she experienced poverty, heat and dust and corruption prevailing in Indian society, her faith automatically turned into a mere illusion and with this illusionary state of mind she uses negative image of India. Her disillusionment with Indian culture does not shake her entire faith in India.*

*In Heat and Dust, Jhabvala presents the mixture of the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the sensual. The author presents her most composite picture upto date of a historical, social and spiritual India and examines the differing depths of alien's penetration into two India's- The separatists of the Raj and Catholic one of post independence. This research paper is valid enough question and analyze image of Indian cultural ethos in the writings of Jhabvala where she has presented India in different shades.*

Ruth Praver Jhabvala, known as a renowned novelist and story teller of present century, has distinctive achievements as a literary artist. Her creativity as a writer is the result of her European sensibility modified, enriched and also enraged by her Indian family life. Her passage from Europe to India and then India to United States has given a triangular mode to her thematic perceptions and literary craftsmanship. Jhabvala questions the cross-cultural conflicts in her novels on the complexities of culture, history and psychology. She paints the picture of the middle class that imitates the way of the Westerners while professing attachment to the Indian values of social life. The attachment of this class to Indian culture is superficial. Indians pose themselves to be the real representatives of Indian culture but in effect they have a hybrid culture. Her Indian characters are seen by Western eyes, and the Western characters are seen by the eyes of Indian characters. Jhabvala furnishes the obvious details of Indian life.

Jhabvala is mainly concerned with the presentation of a graphic picture of the society around her. She is at once an outsider and a resident insider- an insider, who sees everything, even what is hidden from the eyes of the outside world. She is totally unaffected by religion. She is not concerned with the ideological interpretations. She writes about the furious social scuffling in present-day India and describes the head- on collision between the traditional and the modern and the East and the West.

India is a land of glaring contrasts, with poverty, prosperity existing side by side. But Jhabvala, within her limited canvas and with ironic vision has been able to project the real image of India, but her experience has been a nauseating one. Her novels about Westerners in India show the Western involvement in post-independence India. In her novels, Jhabvala questions various reasons for which Westerners come out to India and how their attitudes towards India are conditioned by the nature of their stay in the country. The India, she writes about is not how Indians live, so much as how Europeans who come to see how Indians live.

Jhabvala concentrates on her writing about Europeans in India. Her leading problem is how a Europeans adapts to India. In her novels about Westerners in India, Jhabvala emphasizes the fact that Westerners are no longer here as conquerors but as the conquered ones. Though Jhabvala's range as a novelist is narrow, it is varied enough for

the novelist to find raw fictional material. She does not deal with –the themes, which are beyond her experience. Literate Hindu middle class and European expatriate seem to have strange fascination for her. She writes mainly about the contemporary India and seems to be very curious about the social and domestic problems of her inhabitants. India is not a problem to her as it appears to so many investigators, but a life.

Jhabvala critiques the nature and extent of India's strange appeal for the Europeans. They come here in the hope of discovering a new way of life for the realization of their beings. But they discover that everything, from the physical environment to the spiritual reality, seems hostile to them and they go back untouched by the Indian influence. She feels that one has to pass through the burning deserts to reach the cool grove of trees, the place of love and fulfilment, which leads one to snow-clad mountains, the higher plane of spiritual reality. Jhabvala says that the Westerners come to India for spiritual gains and the tragedy is that the Indians are flocking to the West for materialistic ventures, which have already been abrogated by the Europeans. This mad race for materialistic goals make the Indians a laughing stock and they indulge in midnight sexual orgies with female visitors from Europe. Under these circumstances, it becomes imperative for the European seekers to develop a repulsive attitude towards India and anything Indian. Consequently they start abhorring India and make up their mind to go back like Esmond in *Esmond in India*.

Jhabvala says that there is a cycle that every Westerner here in India passes through. Firstly he has tremendous enthusiasm- everything Indian is marvellous; secondly, everything Indian is not so marvellous; and thirdly everything Indian is abominable. Though she writes about the middle class society and about Westerners in India, she shows an admirable awareness of Indian problems by and large. She presents –an India with backwardness in the form of hypocrisy, poverty, dirt, disease which according to her prevail abundantly in India. She observes nostalgically that all the time she knows herself to be on the back of this great animal of poverty and backwardness. Since she is a social realist and has studied India from a close quarter, she shows her deep concern for India.

The writer expresses her sympathy for the Indians who are easily influenced by the people putting on yellow or orange robes. She says that India should not be taken to be represented by the swamis wearing orange robes but by a simple and more natural way of

life in which the Westerners lose themselves in order to find themselves. Jhabvala gives the example of Chid in *Heat and Dust*, who fails to find himself. He is inspired by a spiritual discourse and shaves off his head; He puts on yellow robes and performs Yogic exercises in order to reach the spiritual heights mentioned in Hinduism. He strives hard to lead a simple life and falls ill. Later on he finds a Guru who initiates him. He finds it difficult to follow the advice of his Guru. Chid is shown by Jhabvala to have all the sincerity, devotion of faith required in a Hindu disciple. Who follows the instructions of his Guru and passes through all kinds of ordeals and hardships for the realization of his mission.

The novelist finds out the heart; of the mystery of India's past elsewhere in the superstitions and the strange ceremonies and rituals that are wrongly associated with religion in India. She also explores the sanctity of shrines like the shrine of Baba Firdaus mentioned in *Heat and Dust*. Jhabvala says that a real change has now taken place in India between the periods of pre-independence and post-independence. Many impediments in the way—of an understanding between the Indians and the Britishers have disappeared. The writer says that harmony between any two communities is possible on the level of humanity rather than that of exploitation and self-interest by one at the cost of the other.

In *Heat and Dust*, Jhabvala presents the character of Maji, an old woman living on the fringe of the town and symbolically signifies the dual relationship of Maji, both in the town and in the society. She is full of sympathy and compassion for human beings. The writer suggests that for understanding India the British should not try to understand the Indian scriptures alone; they should also assimilate religion as it is lived and practiced in India.

*Heat and Dust* encompasses the experience of two generations of English men and women, and their Indian counterparts are brought in very close association with a view to highlight the differences between them. The characters seem to move around the same spot, the same centre and firmly relive that experience. This demonstrates Jhabvala's knowledgeable comment that India always changes people.

To contrast the European attitude Jhabvala paints the pathetic death scene of the old woman, for no one had cared for her during illness. Human life in India is very cheap. It is utterly devoid of a sense of sympathy. The symbolism of the novel is based on sexuality

and disease. A picture of fake sadhus and spiritual quest of Chidanand presents the show off and hollowness of pseudo- spiritualists who are to be found in abundance in India. Jhabvala's fiction adds new dimensions to the theme of cross-cultural conflict and the close interaction between spiritualism and materialism. It may be pointed out that this conflict is actually much more acute than what projected by Jhabvala. The West swarms to the East for spiritual attainment, fulfilment, but finds that there is a deep holocaust over the Eastern horizon. India is not what it appears to be. It is a land with poverty writ large on its face. A wide gap is seen between the rich and the poor. Scruples, rules and duties are the lot of the poor, while the privileges and benefits are always for the rich. It is a moneyed civilization. All human relationships are based on this assumption. This mad race for materialistic values makes the Indians a laughing stock. On the whole, we can say that as a social realist, Jhabvala has contributed half of its creative bulk to the intra-cultural theme. Surely a few English writers have written of India with greater honesty, or, with a sensibility more open and delicate than her.

Jhabvala presents her most composite picture up to date of a historical, sociological and spiritual India and examines the differing depths of the alien's penetration into the two Indias-the separatist one of the Raj and the catholic one of post-independence. Together they explore the theme of East-West relations that affirm Aziz's prophetic remarks in *A Passage to India*:

“We shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea and then’,.....‘you and I shall be friends.” (Forster 1952, 317)

In *Heat and Dust*, Jhabvala presents the story of a European woman, who alienated from her own culture, strives to build a relationship with the unknown world of Indian reality. The narrator is a young educated girl disenchanted with European culture. She comes to India fascinated by her step-grandmother, who had eloped with an Indian prince fifty years earlier.

There are two lines of narrative: one rooted in British India of 1923, woven around Olivia, who is the wife of an Indian civil servant. She is fed up with the suffocating life of the Britishers and runs away with an Indian Prince. The other situation in post-independence India runs around the narrator who follows the footsteps of her step-

grandmother. Thus Jhabvala juxtaposes two significant points in Indian history which serve as ironic commentary on each other and bring out the differences and similarities in the two situations. The two narratives do not run like parallel streams without taking notice of each other, rather they criss-cross and intermingle to constitute one main stream of consciousness, the consciousness of the narrator. On the other hand, by giving representative images from these different points in history, the novelist builds a panoramic view of Indian social reality.

India has a strange appeal to Europeans who come here in the hope of discovering a new way of life for the realization of their innermost being. But they discover that everything, from the physical environment to the spiritual reality, seems hostile to them. Jhabvala says:

“One has to pass through the burning deserts to reach the cool grove of trees, the place of love and fulfillment, which leads one to the snow-clad mountains, the higher planes of spiritual reality.”(Sohi 1986, 4)

Jhabvala shows that the Indians have a mentality of being easily influenced by the people putting on yellow or orange robes, taking them to be genuine sadhus but every such person is not a genuine sadhu. Infact advanced sadhus and swamis in the field of spirituality are rare. They are sometimes “an odd combination of worldly wisdom and, of other worldly charm.” The westerners are attracted to them because they are tired of their material west.

The novelist gives the example of Child, a young English boy, who is inspired by a lecture given by an Indian professor. He shaves off his head and puts on yellow clothes. He strives hard to lead a simple life, but he falls ill. He finds a Guru who initiates him. But he finds himself unable to follow the advice of his Guru. In a state of bankruptcy, he is constrained to get money from his parents. Thus we see that child is shown by Jhabvala to have all the sincerity, devotion of faith required in Hindu disciple who follows the instructions of his Guru and passes through all kinds of hardships for the realization of his mission.

Thus Jhabvala explores the integral constituents of the Indian social and religious reality and observes that people still believe in- all kinds of superstitions and ceremonies and rituals. Jhabvala describes one of the Hindu shrines in *Heat and Dust*. The shrine was

no more than a hole in the wall and one had to stoop to get through the opening. She also mentions a very sacred shrine of Baba Firdaus and describes the happenings at that shrine. The story that is associated with it, is about a Hindu festival. The writer shatters the common illusion about the sanctity of such shrines by telling how even deceits lay garlands on the mound and set sticks of smoldering incense.

In this novel, Jhabvala portrays two kinds of society: society of pre-independence time and society of post-independence time. In the pre-independence time, the Britishers are shown conducting themselves in relation to the Indians, the colonisers in relation to the natives. In the post-independence time, there is a marked change towards mutual friendship and understanding.

Jhabvala has also taken into account the Indian family system. The narrator's attention is centered on a small family consisting of Inder Lal, a government clerk, his wife, Ritu, three small children and his mother. The father is missing and the family is run by Inder Lal's mother rather than by himself. Thus we see that the novel *Heat and Dust* makes a realistic functional study of the Indian social reality in the two different eras evolved.

The critics confine their analysis to the talent and technique of Jhabvala. Critics like Shahane have tried to analyse Jhabvala's use of the Indian environment especially its *Heat and Dust* as symbols of India. Gooneratne remarks:

“Her intention and her artistic method are so closely related, and their unify in turn so intricately interwoven with such other aspects of her writing as its timeliness and timelessness, its value as social documentation and the sensitivity with which she interprets character and motive in relation to both individual temperament and cultural conditioning, that some such tool becomes indispensable.” (Gooneratne 1983, 29)

Thus it becomes apparent that the method of narrating an event and of communicating the European's vision of India seem to be the central problems of Jhabvala. Her basic position is that first she is a European writer and second she writes primarily for a Western audience. She seems to be an outsider for a while, yet she plunges into the small circles, enters the consciousness of her characters and then describes what she has observed.

Iyengar views the descriptions of eating at parties as providing “the appropriate background, sometimes for the forging of transient emotional tics and sometimes for the opening of discreet marriage negotiations.” (Iyengar 1973, 454)

Her area of observation is very wide and she renders all that she observes in a comprehensive coverage. She has explored the complexity and subtlety of Indian society and tensions that arise out of the old and the new East and West in a sophisticated way.

Jhabvala’s art of fiction demonstrates the organic quality, the deft interweaving of description of scenes, the modes of narration and the methods of characterization. Jhabvala’s view of environment as a means of delineating characters, and conflict in human relationships is a significant aspect of her art of fiction because as A European writer she responds to the tropical sun of Indian horizons.

Vasant Shahane shows clear appreciation of Jhabvala’s skill and position when he writes:

“In my view Jhabvala should not be linked with other creative Indian writers in English such as Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao or R. K. Narayana, nor with women novelists such as Kamala Markandaya or Nayantara Sahgal. She is in a way unique and the advantages as well as disadvantages of her literary situation are particular to her. The advantage lies in her special position of being A European living in India; the disadvantage too lies in her not being a genuine, grass-rooted Indian. She can, therefore be detached, ironic and satirical. She can view the game of human affairs in an Indian family from a point of view which is both objective and unsentimental.” (Shahane 1976, 13)

Jhabvala has intimate experience of a culture other than her own. She has a growing consciousness of the difference in the two-systems of values-acquired and inherited. This inter-cultural nature of her own self becomes for her a theme of profound interest. The cross-cultural conflict and Indianness of Indian cultural ethos in the mind of the writer makes her search for her true identity.

In *Heat and Dust*, Olivia and the narrator are outsiders and are in search of their identity in India. The central characters in *Heat and Dust* are two such people- each very English in her own time, each allowing her India to captivate her in her own way. The



dilemma of these two is her own. She admits that she doesn't know India. The leading problem for her is to show how a European adapts to India.

No doubt, as the story of *Heat and Dust* moves backward and forward in telling the experiences of Olivia and the Nawab and his modern avatar Inder Lal, Harry and Chid are linked by the use of certain objects and incidents, phrases and experiences as fixed points upon which parallels between different aspects of the two eras can be established: An Italian angel in a British cemetery, looking very 'Indian' in 1973 with its headless, wingless torso; a spring of water in a green grove that makes weary traveller feel she is being received into paradise, the sickness of friend, a pregnancy and its termination are woven into a complex pattern. The modern counterparts of the Nawab etc. are certainly different from each other but they share some basic qualities with each other. Where the Nawab as a ruler of Khatem is born to command, Inder Lal is doomed to take orders from others. Yet they share inner sensitivity, in finding their marriage partners unsatisfactory for similar reasons, in valuing, above all things, the miracle of personal relationships. Both are poetically sentimental about their past.

The society of both the pre-independence and the post-independence time is portrayed in the novel. In the pre-independence time, before the advent of the British Raj, Indians were the sole rulers of the country, and had kept intact the age-long traditions in various walks of Indian life. But with the arrival of Britishers on the scene and mixing of the Indian and the Western social and cultural mores, there were far-reaching political and social changes.

The British way of life in India is presented in *Heat and Dust* as restrictive, both of Europeans in their contact with Indians and their experiences of India and of Indians such as the Nawab, inheritor of a noble and warlike tradition. The Nawab is forced by the Britishers to confine himself to orderly paths. Although he possesses the character, intelligence and ability to rule absolutely as his ancestors did. The Nawab "degenerates under the idleness and the petty economics forced upon him by the British rule. (Gonneratne 1983, 216)

This part of the novel is set in the India of twenties of the 19th century. It shows the clash of personalities who belong to two races and had a different cultural heritage.

The Nawab has a dominating personality. None can resist him and his command, when he means it. Harry's first visit to Olivia's residence tells us that the Nawab is irresistible. Harry stole a look and talks of the Nawab in a mesmerised manner to make an indelible impression on her:

“.....He's a very strong person. Very manly and strong. When he wants something. Nothing must stand in his way. Never; ever. He's Nawab since he was fifteen. I told one does not say no to such person..... He most particularly wants you to come.” (Ruth 1975, 38)

Harry's relations with Nawab are puzzling. Harry feels that he does not like him sometimes, but sometimes he is extremely loved and pampered by him. He cannot make out what he feels for him and what he does not feel. It is apparent from Olivia's reply. “But that means he likes you.” Douglas feels that persons like Harry are hangers on Nawab.

When for the first time, Olivia is invited at the Nawab's palace, she feels very excited. She feels that she has at last come to a right place. Harry admires Douglas; he whispers to Olivia:

“I like your husband.....when his eyes come back to Olivia; he rolled them in distress. She knew it was disloyal, but she could hardly help smiling.” (19)

The Nawab's palace appears to Olivia to be grand that evening. Her eyes light up as she is led into the dining room and she sees.

“Beneath the chandeliers the long, long table laid with a several dinner service silver, crystal, flowers, candelabras, pomegranates, pineapples and little golden bowls of crystallised fruits. She felt that she had, at last in India, come to the right place.” (15)

At the dinner in the Nawab's palace, she realised that here at least was one person in India who took interest in her the way she was used to. It becomes apparent from their meeting that Olivia likes India and its people. She wants to stay here until her death, likewise the narrator does not want to leave India. She does not want to share the reactions of those Europeans who say that they have come here to find peace but all they find here is dysentery.

Olivia no longer belongs to the world of Britishers and for her Douglas as an individual and as a husband just no longer exists. As the time passes, Olivia's relations with the Nawab becomes more intimate. She is invited again and again to Khatem. She has started going alone. She accompanies the Nawab without consulting her husband. The car is sent for her by the Nawab. Now the Nawab is confident that his relations with Olivia have gained real depth:

"I feel I can tell you anything, anything at all and you will understand. It is very rare to have this feeling with another person. But with you I have it."  
(46)

Olivia goes to enjoy a picnic party to the shrine of Baba Firdaus. After the game of musical chairs, she finds herself attracted to the young Nawab. One day Harry comes to her to take her out to the Nawab. He deliberately delays. He wants to stay with her. But she "was impatient to be off." Their conversation and feelings at this moment are worth noting:

"Why are eager to go?"

"We are expected" Hearing how lame that sounded she become more irritated with him. She told Harry that Douglas knew about her visiting the palace, that she had been to see him "Yes to see me?" (132-33)

"You want to be the only one- I mean" she said. In the palace, she was the only guest. She said this last bit not quickly enough. She was blushing now and felt entangled. When Harry agreed to go. She felt that now out of pride, or to prove her innocence-she ought to be the one to hang back. She hesitated for a minute but found that she, did not after all have enough pride or innocence. For that she followed him quite quickly in car.

Thus we see how 'passion' works up. It is the human nature based on senses that brings the two adults together. Passion is the magnetic force behind their relations. The Nawab and Olivia are persons of different races and cultures. Passion is the common ground for the interaction of the two cultures. What is the particular point of attraction? What quality of the Nawab really allures her to his side? It can't be the fact of his being a Nawab and his '*Nawabi Shan aur Shaukat*'. Douglas himself is an English officer having a long retinue of servants. Olivia loved Douglas but a strange feeling comes to overpower

her mind. Olivia always loved him for these qualities- for his English solidness and strength; his manliness. But now suddenly she thought:

“What manliness? He can’t even get me pregnant- No English woman is meant to stand it.” (20)

She feels that Douglas has failed to make her pregnant. The inborn motherly instinct drives her to the arms of the Nawab resulting in her pregnancy: Shahne comments:

“Sex in *Heat and Dust*, has hardly any heat or life- giving fire. It stays too much on the surface or becomes an instrument of disaster.” (Shahne 1976, 137)

On the other hand, the Nawab’s attraction towards Olivia, is based on his passion and his revengeful attitude towards the British officialdom. Olivia shares the secret of her pregnancy first with the Nawab and later with Douglas. On hearing this, the Nawab becomes possessive of her, but Olivia decides to secretly get an abortion. The Nawab asks her:

“Really you will do this for me? It seemed to strike him with wonder. You are not afraid? Oh how brave you are! His surprise made her laugh. He never for a moment doubted that the child was his- He becomes possessive about her every and every evening.” (Ruth 1975, 11)

Olivia even decides to live with the Nawab, who gets her a house in the hills. Everyone thinks that Olivia has been used by the Nawab as a means of revenge against the Britishers. It always remains doubtful why on the return of Olivia to Khatem in tatters and rags, does she meet a different fate from the other European lady kept by his father?

Olivia also feels concerned and astonished why they interfere in the local personal affairs of the Nawab. Britishers have come here to establish their superiority. He is a small prince and they never care for him. But whenever a threat comes from Major Minnies, he usually takes it out on Harry:

“Now he is playing English man with me.....English people are so lucky- they have no feelings.” (33)

The antagonism, however, is not between the Nawab and Major Minnies alone, but also between the world of the natives and that of the colonisers. It is largely borne out that the East is East and the West is West and the twain can meet only in the exceptional cases where there is a genuine urge and motivation to participate in each- others existence. Harry, despite his intimate relationship with the Nawab, goes back to England like other Britishers in 1947. Though Olivia stays on, she too lives alone in the hills, mostly cut off from the Indian social reality.

Everybody from European camp was of the opinion that the Nawab had used Olivia as a means of revenge and her pregnancy is looked upon by him as a mark of his triumph against the Britishers. For the coloniser, an attempt by the native to approach the women of the colonial class is an act of revolt against that class. Both the Britishers and the Nawab understand this situation very well. The Britishers are fully convinced that Olivia has been used by the Nawab as a means of revenge against them. At the same time, they also know that the Nawab truly loves Olivia. Thus, in Olivia's time, the Indians and the Britishers were not in mutual harmony. With the end of the ruler-ruled relationship, that is after Indian's independence, there is noticed a marked change towards mutual friendship and understanding.

India having become independent, the thick rock of imperialism which stood between men and men, dividing them into colonisers and the natives, is finally removed. Olivia's step-grand-daughter comes to this changed India- for the post-independence India has definitely changed in its basic complexion. Thus the post-independence modern India is portrayed in terms of the experiences undergone by the narrator while exploring the story of the elopement of her step-grand mother with an Indian Nawab.

The picture, the narrator sketches of India in terms of her own experiences is of a country which is a dirty place, with beggars, flies and a lack of concern for human life. On her very first day in India, the narrator meets in the S.M.Hostel a Christian missionary woman who gives her all sorts of advice about staying here. She says to the narrator that the sights of India are so revolting that one cannot live here without strong religious faith:

“I've seen some terrible sights in India. I've lived through a Hindu-Muslim riot and a smallpox epidemic and several other diseases, and I think I may

rightly say I've seen everything that you can see on this earth. And through it all I've learned this one thing; you can't live in India without Christ Jesus..... Because you see, dear, nothing human means anything here." (5-6)

The narrator who comes to India records different reactions about Indian bureaucracy, conditions in the hospitals, Indian superstitions, about Indian housewives, Indian beggars and religion.

The narrator sees a beggar woman on the heap. She had been in very bad condition. Indians around her never cared for her. They did not care whether she died or survived. She went to the hospital, met Dr. Gopal. She requested him to send an ambulance but it was under repair and in any case meant for cases of emergence only. The woman says to the doctor that she is an emergency. Gopal says to that woman that if the woman is dying, then don't bring her. There is not much we can do. There has been no addition to the hospital for over twenty years. We don't have beds, we don't have staff or equipment. The narrator also feels that she was changing and becoming like everyone else:

"But also I thought that if one lives Here, it is best to be like everyone else- Perhaps there is no choice; everything around me- the people and the landscape, life animate and inanimate seemed to compel me to this attitude." (117)

On coming to Satipur, the narrator finds the Nawab's palace at Khatem. It was in a wretched condition. The narrator sees that the buildings are in dilapidated condition and nobody looks after them. Even the graves are dead now. She visits the Nawab's nephew Karim and his wife Kitty. They are only physically charming but spiritually they are dead and dying. They started the discussion from the Nawab's times to the present days, which had no charm at all. India was, of course, home but was becoming impossible to live in it as Indian government prescribed licences for everything and then refused to issue the licences.

Through the window, the author sees a very horrible scene of poverty. She sees that a large number of crippled children and people are eating from hawkers. She even visualizes men, women, boys and girls sleeping on the streets, for want of money. The missionary woman thinks that things stand redeemed here only by the grace of Christ:

“If He’s not with you every single moment of the day and night and you praying to him with all your might and main- if that's not there, then you become like that poor young man with the monkey taking lice out of his hair.” (5-6)

In the writers evaluation, India’s independence has done no good and has solved no problems. The situation is fast deteriorating. A wide gap is seen between the rich and the poor. People grow indifferent to beggars and the down-trodden people in the society. General public is wanting in virtue. On her arrival, the narrator meets a missionary who tells her about Kafrabad. Kafrabad is a growing city because of textile mills-but not growing in virtue. She says:

“Thirty years ago she might have said there is a hope of growing virtue but today it is none. More wages mean more selfishness, more country liquor, more Cinema. The women used to wear simple plain cotton dhotis but now they all want to be shiny from the outside. We won’t speak about the inside.” (8)

The novelist undergoes all sorts of sad experiences in India and comes to believe that Indians are dirty and dishonest and she thinks:

“That the longer she stayed in India, the more her face would become like that.” (21)

The narrator visualizes that Indians are more religious than Europeans. When the narrator goes to one of the shrines with Inder Lal, she notes Inder Lal was making obeisances to the three smiling Gods. He had shut his eyes and his lips moved devoutly. Olivia also visited the shrine five decades ago in the company of the Nawab and found the shrine very attractive, for the place where it was situated, had a strange appeal for a visitor like her:

“The rocky, completely barren and exposed path led to the grove: but once there, it was like being received in paradise. The sun could not reach there through the foliage of the trees; the sound of the little spring trickled cool and fresh.” (124)

Olivia visited this place five decades ago in the company of the Nawab and got pregnant. The narrator too visits the place in the post-independence era not in the company of a Nawab but of a middle class person, the Clerk Inder Lal. She too is affected by the romantic environment and has sex with him, resulting in pregnancy. Inder Lal, too makes the same joke as the Nawab did about what might have happened on the original Husband's Wedding Day to make the barren wife pregnant.

Jhabvala shatters the common illusion about the sanctity of such shrines by telling how even deceits lay garland on the mound and set sticks of incense smouldring. Not only barren woman, but also criminals visit this place. India is a country having a rich traditional culture and the Indian women are as devoted to their husbands as they were decades ago. The Westerners cannot quite understand the peculiar bent of the Indian people towards superstitions and supernatural beliefs. There are many other things which attract and disturb Europeans about India. Douglas Rivers, what to think of other things, comments on Hindustani language:

“It is the only language In which you can deliver deadly insults with most flowery courtesy.” (53)

Indian marriages are arranged ones, whereas the Europeans have a consideration for the partners only. Inder Lal tells the narrator that Ritu (his wife) has been chosen on the account of her suitable family background and her fair complexion. His mother had told him she was pretty but he never could make up his mind about that. Sometimes he thought yes, sometimes otherwise.

The cross-cultural conflict is to be best seen in the experiences and reactions of the Europeans in India. Gooneratne in her study of Jhabvala says that:

“Using flash backs to the incidents that occurred in 1920s, in order to add an extra dimension of time for the confirmation of a pattern,.....so far traced only in terms of contemporary India. The reader is presented with a series of case studies of Europeans of both. The periods which are at different points on the wheel of change-change both of principle and behaviour.” (Gooneratne 1983, 211)



Jhabvala, in the introduction to her book *An Experience of India* records three types reactions of the Europeans to Indian set up. She says:

“India reacts very strongly on people, some loathe it, some love it, most do both. There is cycle that European- by European I mean all Westerners, including Americans, tend to pass through. It goes like this: first stage tremendous enthusiasm- everything in India is marvellous; second stage, every thing Indian is not so marvellous; third stage, everything Indian is abominable. For some people it ends there, for others the cycle renews itself and goes on.” (Ruth 1971, 7)

India still retains her old traditional culture where great emphasis is laid on the spiritual rather than this material aspect of life. Jhabvala says that Indians have a mentality of being easily influenced by the people putting on yellow or orange robes. But she says that every such person is not a genuine-sadhu. Westerners are attracted towards them not because the East has a message to give also because they are fed up with their material West.

The narrator gives the example of Chid, a young English boy, who has been named Chidanand by one of the swamis. The narrator finds that Inder Lal is much impressed with Chid. As soon as he comes home from the office, he climbs up to my room and sits there for hours listening to, Chid. The narrator wanted Chid to leave her room but he did not. Chid is dirty. It seems that chanting has transported him elsewhere perhaps into wide, cooler, brighter, more beautiful regions. He was blissful. When Chid went on a pilgrimage with Ritu, he kept on writing letters to the narrator in a typical style.

Chid is shown to be a completely changed person, after her suddenly returns from his pilgrimage to the cave of Amarnath. From a Hindu ascetic, he has become a Christian boy. He has parted from his orange robes and carries no bead or a begging bowl. Jhabvala seems to convey in Chid a symbolic meaning. After this change, he now takes only English food. He has changed to such iin extent that he can no longer stand the smell of people who live and eat differently. So Europeans get attracted to Indian spiritualism. Then they come to India,, and coming in contact with pseudo spiritualists, they get Confused and baffled. It is a judgement on the hollowness of Indian way of religion and her sadhus.

An image of contemporary India society is presented by Jhabvala through the experiences of Chid. She says that temples which were considered sacred places, have now become places where crimes like robbery are committed. The writer explores the integral constituents of the Indian social and religious reality and observes that people still believe in all kinds of superstitions, strange ceremonies and rituals.

A story about a Hindu festival attaches to the shrine of Baba Firdaus. Once a childless grief-stricken woman, driven out by her husband, who wanted to marry again, comes to the grove of Firdaus to hide her shame. At this place, she has a vision that she would give birth to a child in nine month's time and this proves true. Thus that day is celebrated as a festival called "The Husband's Wedding Day." On this date, some elderly women bring their barren daughters-in-law to Baba Firdaus's shrine in the hope of their being blessed with children. Even the Foreigners are also attracted to this shrine. In the pre-independence era, Olivia comes to this shrine with the Nawab. The Nawab tells the story to Olivia. Olivia feels herself to be believing the story, for she, too, is childless. It is at this shrine that the surrender of Olivia to the Nawab is complete, resulting in her pregnancy. Smiling in the post-independence era, the narrator visits this shrine in the company of Inder Lal and has sex with him, resulting in pregnancy.

Shahane says that sex and pregnancy seem to be parts of recurring rhythm- of the sequence of events in *Heat and Dust*. The young narrator, too, wants to conceal her pregnancy from Inder Lal because it would worry him. Unlike Olivia this young woman is determined to have her baby after which she hopes to go up to the mountains and join an Ashram. In the same way the narrator allows Chid to go ahead to satisfy his sexual hunger, for as she says:

"He is always hungry and not only for food. He also needs sex very badly and even seems to take it for granted that I will give it to him the same way as I give him foods." (Ruth 1975, 65)

But sex, open sex, is not the feature of Indian society. Indians are not liberal as far as indulgence in sex is concerned whosoever indulges in such activities against the wishes of Lord is bound to suffer. Chid wants to go back. Harry goes back, but Olivia remains to

suffer. She feels that the two cultures have been merged into one but her is foiled. She suffers

the slander.

Thus it is passion for sex, for white skin, for revenge, for possession and for maintaining royalty also that dominates the scene. Olivia never returns either to English colony or to England but stays in a house up on the hills, where she hoped to find the resolution of conflict of two cultures. At this stage of life India itself became a passion for her. She could now feel the Hindu fear of pollution. She went home and bathed rigourously. She was afraid. Pollution- infection seemed everywhere; the beggars, who were allowed to move freely in society, seem to her part and parcel of Indian culture. Suttee incident has been included in 1923s part of India and it seems quite improbable at that time. The narrator tells us that Inder Lal's mother took her to see the suttee shrines. She showed her a cluster of little shrines under some trees. These were not bigger than mile stones, though some of them had little domes on top. The Nawab in 1923, has his own bitter reactions to record about Suttee custom. He says:

“These people will never learn, whatever we do, they will still cling to their barbaric customs.” (60)

But Dogiilas Rivers retorts that he is misinformed, even the unfortunate woman's relatives- are in some quarters regarded as martyrs. Dr. saunders and crawfords don't believe word of it. Olivia declares that Suttee is a noble institution, and thinks that woman should surely follow the man she cares for so exclusively to the other world. She asserts that Suttee is a part of the Hindu religion and infact apart from religion:

“It is their culture who are we to interfere with anyone's culture especially an ancient one like theirs.” (62)

The narrator tells her of one experience when she heard strange sounds in the dead of night. Mother-in-law of Ritu held her hand and put her hand on her mouth. Ritu struggled for

a while. Her mother went to the jars where rice was stored and she scattered a handful of rice over Ritu's head. The mother opened and closed her hand and circled it over that

bowed head. She was murmuring some incantation. But her position grew worse and worse.

The nameless narrator wonders that Ritu, wife of Inder Lal, does not get tired of being shut up in her two small rooms all day and everyday. Inder Lal never discusses the affairs of office with his wife and is not in the habit of taking her out of the house. The narrator is convinced that to survive in this world full of human suffering and misery, it is necessary to develop a kind of insensitivity, an apathy to the situation.

Notwithstanding all this differentiation that Jhabvala makes, she seems to suggest that the concept of tradition and modernity in any age or generation is relative. Thus the novel *Heat and Dust*, in the course of making a realistic fictional study of the Indian social reality- in the two different eras, exposes the soul and nerve ends of a fascinating and compelling country, for this is what India is in the eyes of Jhabvala.

Though the works of Mrs. Jhabvala have been analysed from various angles yet my concern in this research paper is limited only in questioning of Indian cultural ethos. Her novels explore middle class families in Delhi in the period after independence. She concentrates upon family life, social problems and personal relationships in the joint family system, with all opportunities for intrigue and marital feudings. The total view that emerges in the whole lot of her fiction is not multidimensional. She refuses to romanticise India in the sense that India she builds up is not a reservoir of possibilities as per its past tradition of religion and culture, but it is a social India confined to the few city-families. She keeps her detached view concerned with the Indian social transformation, varied characters and Europeans expatriates. It cannot be neglected that her hidden assurance in Indian culture inspires her to write about Indian social life and aim of present research is to highlight the writer's faith in Indian culture.

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