



## CONFLICT AND ADJUSTMENT IN THE NOVELS OF RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA

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### ABSTRACT

Ruth Praver Jhabvala, although European, she explored the associated themes of love, marriage and family life in some of her novels, all related very closely to the type of family which is still characteristic of India. She displayed her feminine sensibility in her perception of the predicament of Indian women and family life. Her first fiction *To Whome She Will* is a brilliant social comedy. In view of the ending, of the novel *The Little*, which points to individual fulfillment takes on ironic overtones. She further, in *Nature of Passion* dealt with the conflict between old and young, orthodoxy and reform, tradition and modernity. It represented the aspect of manners as well as morals, and a colourful spectrum of creative consciousness with the added advantage of their feminine sensibility. It is all about the quest for female liberty and identity. Actually she lighted upon what is bizarre, what is knotted with selfdeception and contradiction. She depicted everywhere that tradition's root is too strong to uproot so the cycle of change is unable to move while main portrayal of both the novels are a token of change in the gust of modernity, it resulted into conflict, But the guardians compelled to come under the shelter of tradition after that compromise takes important place in the novels. What Jhabvala had written, was a necked reality of the contemporary India of about lower strata of society....

**Key words :** Conflict, compromise, tradition, adjustment, social change.

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Present research work is about seeking harmony in the novels of R.P. Jhabvala. This becomes very important issue in even the globalization. I think that harmony is like elixir in this muddy world. Everyone is searching for a drop of elixir which becomes the pretention of further life. It may be in the form of compromise, sacrifice and respect.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala is a polish Jew brought up by refugee parents in England. She drank deep English language during her stay in London. She did her graduation from London University and married a parasi architect. She became Indian except her blood and dedicated herself as a fiction writer on Indian themes, where individualism was

closely associated with the rise of the Indian English fiction. In The mean time an interesting aspect of the modern Indian enlightenment had been the creative focus on the feminine sensibility so she interplayed with the thoughts of mind what she faced.

Conflict is a word which exists every where. Ever since the society came in existence, conflict started its work, some time for food some time for existence, some time for tradition. It never disappeared from the society. When Ruth Prawr Jhabvala at the very first arrived in Delhi, Delhi was on the forefront of change. Entire country confronted choas and breakdowns. R.P. Jhabvala felt it from the bottom of her heart and beautifully

penned it. Some novels of R.P. Jhabvala depict the burning social problems as cross-generation conflict, class conflict, cross-cultural conflict.

It is seen that conflict is common in R.P. Jhabvala's novels, such as social, mental, socio-economical and conflict between tradition and modernity in every sphere of life. One thing is very common in her earlier novels that she depicts all the circumstance related to upheaval of the society but at the last step she suddenly changes all the scenario and keeps all the portrayal under the limits of their traditional society.

In her first novel *To Whom She Will*, she describes unsuccessful love of Hari, a lower middle class and Amrita who belongs to upper middle strata of society. Conflict arises in many shades because the youth of different classes want to live their eternal life with each other. Their parents disagreed to hear their decision. Hari easily surrenders and marries another girl of the same class. Amrita became rebellious and took decision to go to England but Hari denies because his mother does not agree.

The sharp satiric exposure of Indian ego, pretentiousness, complacency, sentimentality and attitude towards money and marriage and the conflict with each other, one represented with authenticity in *To Whom She Will*. The younger generation is modern in its outlook and has fascination for western culture and mannerism, however they lack the courage to revolt against harmful old values and traditions. Their allegiance is to their family but few of them do not like to surrender and this causes conflict leading to frustration.

Being a keen observer of Indian society R.P. Jhabvala observed minute heartbeat and pulse. She exposes the foibles and eccentricities of her characters in an ironic manner. The yearnings of her Indian characters are shown hypocritical, such as a businessman who practices charity and dishonesty with equal fervour.

Mrs. Jhabvala's novels portray the society of post-independent India - a society which had been deeply affected by the struggle for independence from the colonial rule. The newly independent India was beset with immediate problems of religious

fanaticism, social division based on caste, illiteracy and poor economy with the attainment of independence people expected the country to make immediate progress in different fields.

Thus the old generation was the custodian of traditional values and the Anglo-influenced new generation was follower of modern thoughts. Entire country became the fertile land for various types of conflict. This conflict was for change, not for battle. *To Whom She Will* is a social comedy. She infuses the cross-generation conflict with humour and ends the novel by resolving the conflict between young and old in a beautiful Indian satisfactory manner to all concerned.

When she sarcastically describes about the manners and habits of new rich, very fond of the affectation, showing their riches - Hari's sister Prema is seen as-

"As usual lying on the bed eating sweets  
huge yellow laddus, white Barfi with  
breathes thin silver paper, brown Gulab  
Jamun oozing syrup Golden rings of Jalebi"

After various conflict, adjustment and compromise is changing the situation. Love does not win, it is traditional family who wins the battle because R.P. Jhabvala with her keen observation and sharp insight depicts that even today marriage is slave to tradition in India. It reveals a world order in which a stubborn identification with one's inherited culture is both realistic and desirable. These families, authentic representatives of their respective communities but the lines that each draws to ensure its separateness are equally sacred and inviolable.

Next step of R.P. Jhabvala is 'Nature of Passion'. In the same manner she described the conflict between old and young. It is also a conflict between upper class and lower middle class. In earlier novels cross-generation is her forte. *Nature of Passion* is a documentation of upper class life. R.P. Jhabvala's penetration, sharp insight works in a very powerful manner. About this contemporary society of 'Nature of Passion' Vasant A. Sahane depicts-

"The atomization of the west  
has not yet effected the  
spirit of Indian society and  
the heart of the emotionally

generous individual”.

Lala Narayan Das Verma a prosperous Punjabi contractor in Delhi, feels that he is responsible for the happiness of his children, therefore only he decides what is best for his children. The other side coin is related to the liberty. New generation wants to lead a free life, due to it tension arises, clash begins between old and young, between tradition and modernity.

Nimmi is well bred girl of this modern society, ruled over by a patriarch- the center of power and responsibility, the joint family. The Nature of Passion is presented as a complex and formidable force. This novel opens with several scenes of tension and domestic discord for which Lala ji's wife, his sister and eldest son hold him responsible. Then complaint is that instead of confining his younger children within traditional moulds he has not only educated them but allowed them to forget the real business of life.

In the battle of 'Nature of Passion' there are two camps in family, one is determined to follow the traditional way of life and other engaged in a battle against tradition, all are at loggerheads with one another. Nimmi is very fond of liberty, pampered by her father. Nimmi's education and exposure to the outside world has produced a lot of bitterness, she likes western and elegant manners, she met a parsi boy Pheroze Batliwala. She is fond of clubs and parties without the consent of parents. Cross-generation is burning problem of today's society. A European writer gives accurate information about Indian culture and modern society.

Like Amrita, Nimmi is a modern young girl who strongly believes in women's emancipation, going to clubs, playing tennis keeping bob hair, dressing stylishly. Nimmi's new-look astonished her mother, phuphi ji and even her elder sister Usha. Jhabvala shows Nimmi as a token of change in her gust of modernity when she says to her pitaji-

“Pita Ji it is my hair.”

At the moment of change Lala Ji's family touches the chord of the conflict between the orthodox and reform, old and young, tradition and modernity, materialism and idealism. After the clash and conflict Jhabvala seems careful at the sametime

to underline Nimmi's snobbishness. In this way Jhabvala avoids taking sides of young and rebellions. As a women novelist she shown her keen insight into family and women character. It is an exploration of sociological ideas. It is a world of shifting values full of possibilities for the enterprising male and the liberated female.

The effect of survival of the fittest has mentained its law all over the two novels. Main protagonist in both the novels Amrita and Nimmi tries to rebel, conflict arises after that they are compelled to adjust and to do compromise on the traditional ground. Heart breaks but affectation saves it's place. Seeing all the advancement and fashionable style of living in Nimmi's personality her phuphi ji declares in stifling orthodoxy manner-

“A girl of that age has no right to enjoy herself, she should be managing a household and bearing children and looking after husband.”

Jhabvala creates a situation in her novel in which female characters are caught in a state of transition from tradition to modern ways. The idea of sending girls to college in Lala ji's family creates major conflict between old and young orthodoxy and reform. Jhabvala always gives a turning point to the novels through her portrayals. Elder brother Om expresses his anger about college goes-

“This college, said Om talking more loudly it is only a waste of time and of money and will perhaps even give her wrong ideas”.

He wants to announce that winds of change through education is the waste of everything -money, value time etc. Nimmi is a symbol of change. The history has been its witness that change in the society brings turmoil. Jhabvala turns and becomes a torch bearer like a senior citizen of family and saves their social reputation and tradition for which they one worry. It is an adjustment and compromise of an orthodoxy family under which a positive wind turns its face.

Jhabvala's aim is to give a true picture of middle class Indian society. Nimmi like Amrita sacrifices her desires and comes back into her tradition bound family. Love marriage is opposed by relatives in both the novels. All the guardians are shown money-minded. At every step R.P. Jhabvala is

more concerned with social realities which affected Jhabvala in her observation of Indian society of the then Delhi. Jhabvala ironically flashes up sharp light through Nimmi on the down trodden situation of women in her orthodoxy and men overwhelming society-

“When your husband comes you will not dare to raise your eyes to his face and you will never speak his name and you will do everything that he tells you to do which he likes you will let him beat you.”

Jhabvala depicts the real status of women in middle class society. Community and family pressures compel Pheroz and Nimmi to prevent family traditions, The sharp satiric exposure of Indian ego, pretentiousness, sentimentality and attitude towards money and marriage and conflict with each other are presented with accuracy and authenticity in both the novels. About the literary influence of Jane Austen on R.P. Jhabvala Arthur Marshal said –

“The literary comparison came to my mind was Jane Austene - R.P. Jhabvala has a gentle irony which she allows to play across her character, they are for the most part small and mean and ridiculous, but however small and mean they may be she does not despise them. Her laughter is the warm laughter of some one who has seen how absurd people are and who loves them for their absurdity”.

Jhabvala with her sharp insight paid specific attention to the society which had always ‘in group’ society than its counterpart in west . After every conflict result comes in different form. Joint family system is breaking down and almost taking its spiritless breathe under various economic and social pressures but in group feeling and togetherness still strong and remain.

Any literature is the mirror of the society because true writer can not go beyond society, society is traditional so writer like Jhabvala is bound to go with tradition and values.

These all social marital and familial problems are also in the foreign countries but their culture is Just different. They can not stay with clash and conflict, They all have their own firmament. Durability and eternity of relation is not there, so liberty rules there, not compromise like India. They

are not bound to save any tradition, free life is a reason why citizens are happy.

If we think about the concluding views It is must to say that To Whome She Will and, Nature of Passion are novels whose structural organization reflects the writers own quest for self-identification like Jane Austene. Jhabvala draws her Anglicised portrayals in full flight. These early novel’s beginning is about the own quest of Jhabvala. She kept one eye sight on the wind of change but one eye searched for the conclusion. The very begining of the novels are her own dilemma which she was seeing with her keen insight but when she ends, think about the strong pillars of relationship without which Indianness is soulless.

On the whole these novels are a social satire because she stands with conflict and concludes with compromise. Infact in these novels the strong feel upon the weak. Everyone in every society specially in India is seeing the potential of change within the existing structure of Indian society. In these novels novelist creates harmony whatever is the situation. Threads run positively between the situation.

Jhabvala’s writing is double-layered but not opaquely so, her earliest fictions end with compromise but after that she does not compromise with the self-respect of her female portrayals. Keen observation of society is seen in her novels, and traces the intricacies and compromises of life in New Delhi with a delicious blend of light wit and tender gravity, again showing herself to be a master of social comedy and a brilliant exponent of the Indian character.

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