

Cultural Encounter in Jhabvala's "The Nature of Passion"

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Abstract: *The Indian culture and tradition, Indian value patterns has gone through many stages as the younger generation people wanted to go behind western culture. The joint family is breaking down under various economic, social and industrial powers. Even the urban Indian society wanted to retain its togetherness of family ties. The tradition and the environment become incompatible. The socio-economic cultural contrast is sustained between the Indian and western culture. The social and the cultural freedom should not go beyond the traditional values followed in the family.*

Key words: *culture, tradition, joint family, incompatible, western Cultural Encounter in Jhabvala's "The Nature of Passion".*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Nature of Passion is a realistic photographic picture of family life of Lala Narayana Das Verma (Lalaji) a wealthy contractor of Delhi who had earned his own wealth. The life of men and women in his house was poles apart. It is a family chronicle which dramatizes the clashes in between the family in framework of the variations in urban India. The rigidity in the Indian society is that the confrontation between the old and the young, the supporters of convention and the rebellions against the tradition, characterize the social world of Jhabvala's fiction[5]. The situations are individual in the deepest sense but it represents the social change and almost it is typical in the reputation of consciousness. The understanding of those people's social change forms the Jhabvala's main themes of cultural encounter in her fiction[4].

Jhabvala is very thoughtful in depicting the individual relationship with their family along with the social group which demonstrates the Indianness in her novels. Education plays a decisive role in the youngster marriage. In the western culture the marriage of their children is not considered to be the duty of their parents. But in Indian culture parents consider it as their right and motto to get their children married and settled. The clash arises when an Indian girl or boy tries to break the strong bonds of family and follows the choice marriage [11].

2. METHODOLOGY

The women folk in this novel are orthodox, and they are against women's higher education and women's equality as it is inherited in Indian culture[6]. Nimmi's mother and Phuphiji believe that women should not be seen outside except serving food to the members of the family. According to them the role of woman is breeding, rearing babies and idling themselves away in women quarter. The women's role in their family is that they will be busy from morning to night by scolding and getting work from servants, discussion about child birth and marriages, gossiping, praising about the orthodox and speaking against modern and the western ideals.



Ruth Praver Jhabvala

In *The Nature of Passion* the socio-economic cultural contrast between the Indian culture and western culture is exposed through various characters[3]. Lalaji, his wife, Phuphiji, his first two daughters and his elder son Om Prakash represents Indian traditional set of ideas. Nimmi, Lalaji's youngest daughter, Chandra Prakash, the second son and Viddi the youngest son, and his daughter-in-law Kantafollow the western attitudes. Om is a hungry capitalist and is against women's education and modern views of emancipation of women. When Nimmi states about the college and class on Keat's poetry, his brother Om replied that the business of girls going to college itself is fun. Om could not appreciate his younger sister Nimmi's college education. He tells his father: "This college..... is only a waste of time and of good money, and will perhaps even give her wrong ideas"[1].

Elaborating the same idea and traditionalism, Mrs. Jhabvala goes to the extent of putting these words in Om's mouth. Om, pointing at his little daughter who was playing with her brother, says:

Do you know what I will do with that One?.....
when she is seven, I will find a good husband and
betroth her. Then she can come back to the house
and learn from her mother and her aunts to make
chapattis and mango pickle, when she has learnt that
well and also how to manage servants and children, she

can go to her husband's house and be a credit to us there.^[2]

The description though apparently light, is quite significant. It clearly brings out the narrow view of an uneducated person regarding women in India. One can easily guess at this point that it is not only Om but the entire business community in India which thinks that education for women is a waste of good time and money[10]. The girls can only prove to be an asset to their family if they are experts in household chores.

Family in *The Nature of Passions* divided into two camps, one determined to preserve the traditional way of life with the resilience characteristic of the community, and the other engaged in a battle against a tradition that stifles individuality. The members of both camps are alienated from the paterfamilias. Lalaji's wife, his sister and his two older children are never weary of reminding Lalaji that with his concessions to modernity he is endangering the family security, while the independent females Kanta and Nimmi look upon him as the symbol of an inferior culture in whose grip they are inexorably held.

The form it takes is a quest for modernity engaged in by the younger generation [5]. The upholders of tradition, characters like Kanta and Nimmi are in quest of new and progressive identities for themselves. Chandra Prakash puts into practice some of the ideas imbibed during his stay abroad. He marries Kanta who belongs to a different community and attempts to set up a nuclear family away from the joint family headed by his father. His government job further distances him from preoccupations of his father and brother who are engaged in business and he is ill at family gatherings. Kanta, who had been a school teacher before marriage, is bent on anglicization with a vengeance. Her children attend exclusive private schools, speak excellent English and indifferent Hindustani, and have perfect manners. She reads the right magazines and faithfully follows their instructions, whether it is in furnishing her house or in providing the right kind of support and companionship to her husband. She is proud of moving in elite circles and is afraid that any contact with her husband's family might degrade her in the eyes of her friends. Yet Jhabvala stresses the fact that she and Chandra Prakash cannot break away completely from his family and it is money, not affection, which is the binding factor. As they cannot maintain their lifestyle on his pay alone Lalaji's help is frequently required. Chandra Prakash and his family needs financial support of joint family which Lalaji provides it. Kanta is an opportunist who treats Lalaji with contempt because she knows that Lalaji's code will make him help his son always, but she has no pride at all when it comes to fawning upon her husband's Head of Department, as that would strengthen his chances of promotion. She pretends to be scandalized at Lalaji's request that Chandra Prakash should remove Om's letter from a file because it might involve him in the T-bribery and corruption case and talks of the sacredness of the gazetted officer's position, but later consoles Chandra Prakash after he has removed the letter by implying that his father's money and influence could silence any reprisal even in his act was discovered.

Kanta displays an ambivalent attitude to Lalaji's wealth. Snobbish and pseudo-moral and identifying with a set of shallow bureaucrats, she is ashamed of his money and capacity for manipulation but have no scruples about exploiting them [7]. Lalaji loves his son and tolerates his daughter-in-law but is incapable of understanding them. Kanta lives in a style far exceeding her husband's income on the strength of her connection with Lalaji but has no hesitation in looking down upon him and bringing up her children beyond all points of contact. The controversy is that the luxuries and wealthy passion, Kanta got it from Lalaji's business which he generated dishonestly. Kanta despise her father-in-law; for her individual reasons. Kanta hates Lalaji only because he is gritty and he does not look up her advanced sophistication and tastes.

Lalaji is corrupt but he is the emperor of capital and devoted to provide everything to his joint family. He has a passion to accumulate wealth and pursuit of wealth is his path of duty[9]. He struggles to raise the commercial middle class with Indian ideals. Kanta do injustice to Lalaji because Lalaji and it is Nimmi who credits him with the instincts and in return receives his unbounded paternal affection and indulgence that almost spoils this voluptuary of a young girl.

Om Prakash's daughter's birth brings the family back in connection after the clash. By setting the scene in a nursing-home rather than in the family house, Ruth Jhabvala is able to depict without any hint of contrivance the fierce determination with which family traditions are preserved and maintained, even when they find themselves in an unfamiliar environment [12]. This traditionalism, it is implied, is the source of the clan's innate strength and resilience, and guarantees its continued prosperity. Since it is expected that the family presents itself in strength on such occasions as births, marriages and funerals, absence from the scene or a lack of proper interest in it on the part of any member of the family denotes a lack of feeling or a faulty upbringing, symptomatic of disrespect and indiscipline at best, and at worst of a reprehensible modernity. Nimmi express by her behaviour on few occasions that she is also in rebellion with the family traditions that threaten her individuality. Her individuality and the clash with the traditionalism and with the wishes of her family to see her settled in life and contributing actively to the numbers and prosperity of the clan [8].

Life for a woman in Lalaji's community, then, is a static affair and marriage a nucleus of unchanging values in which female conformity is integral. But none of it can accommodate Nimmi, pampered by her father and sharing his conviction of her superiority to the women of her kin. The case of Lalaji's younger children is different. They have been brought up in the lap of luxury, but they wish to rise above their bourgeois background, and be taken for elegant, cultured people. The flower of her family in looks, and the pride and joy of her father, is Nimmi. She is smart and cognizant of differences in caste and class. In college she mingles with the girls of aristocratic families and sensibly distinguishes herself from the girls of lower class in her college and womenfolk of her family. She was very pretty and well mannerism has managed her friends of modern families to forget her defective background. Her advancement of refined character makes Nimmi snobbish and despicable towards her family. Money greatly influenced Nimmi[13].

Ved Prakash or Viddi, an enchanted bohemian always spend his time in cafe with his pseudo-artists. He is left free from the necessity of earning money and this makes him to stand away from their business of making money. Even though he neglected his father's wealth, he inwardly carved for money. Viddi's friends worship money avidly than Lalaji so they extract as much money from him as they can. His friends welcome him as a son of rich father. Instead of doing constructive things he always dreams of escaping to abroad, always engaging himself in a literary conversation and of writing books. He had an opinion that one can live a cultured life if they go to England like Chandra Prakash.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As a result, the westernized outlook threatens the peace of mind of the family. The conflict arises between the educated and the uneducated people in the family. The western cultural thoughts weaken the familial strong bonds [14] of Lalaji's family. The cultural difference brings desperation and estrangement in his family. He has avowed to preserve at all cost the love and affection of the family. He used his money and power to save his children from the westernized concepts. The conventional Lalaji, even though unrefined, he is more compassionate than the

western followers of their family. The inspiration of the western ideals has not much affected the essence of Indian people and the emotions of generous individual.

4. CONCLUSION

In short culture varies in the different parts of the world. They are different across the land boundaries. The diversity in cultures results in the diversity in the people around the world. It is also a system of beliefs, principles and principles held by the people of the region. Cultural values are imparted from one generation to another as a result of continuation of traditions as a part of culture. It belongs to a single community not to any single human being. The younger generation, the upholders of western ideals must understand that the older generation people, who are the traditional followers, are not against modern ideals. They need their younger generation not to abuse the freedom and harmony of the family.

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