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CONTRASTED VALUE SYSTEMS IN JHABVALA'S *UNIVERSE*

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Abstract

The present paper deals with the one of the most important thematic aspects of Ruth Praver Jhabvala short Stories. It deals the clash of old value system and modern value system. Jhabvala breaks fresh grounds and give new dimensions to the short Stories. She takes common domestic matters and shows how the lives of her character are influenced by a changing society. Her stories take into consideration the diversity of character, situations and point of view which is typical of her work. This paper will discuss her stories from the Volume Like Birds, Like Fishes highlighting the contrasted Value Systems ie traditionality and modernity.

Keywords: Old Value system, new value system, Dimensions, Diversity, point of view, traditionality, Modernity.

Jhabvala portrays a particular class that is middle class in her works. Her writing portrays the lower middle class with sympathy and understanding. She also delineates the rising commercial bourgeois which by no means is really sophisticated. Jhabvala shows her awareness of the variety and complexity of the post-independence Indian society. She in her literary work endeavors to portray the human potent of this society caught in the conflict of change from tradition to modernity i.e., conflict between old and new values.

The present paper focuses on stories which show the change in the mental makeup of modern Indian society. 'Like Birds, Like Fishes' contains stories like The Old Lady, 'The Widow' "My First Marriage.

In The Old Lady Jhabvala clearly shows the conflict between traditionality and modernity. Here she shows the conflict between tradition and modernity. Here she shows the conflict through the changed concept of marriage. As CB Memoria depicts

Desertion and Divorce are the final tragic denouement of family disorganization and are open indications of a rift in the family disorganization, avowals of a breakdown in the marital bond and the evidence of a desire to escape the onus of the marriage ties.

This statement is well confirmed in this story because of the change in the societal values and the increasing independence of the married woman has pulled her further apart and has changed the concept of marriage. In this story the clash is between the old lady and her daughter, Leila, who in turn shows the conflict between the old age values and the new values. The old values are shown by the old lady and the new values are shown by Leila.

The story is written in first person narration. The narrator is an old lady whose daughter Leila wants to divorce her husband. Leila thinks the divorce is a natural thing in modern society. "Our attitude of mind is wrong we don't understand that divorce is a natural thing in an enlightened society (p.17). Not so the old lady she thinks that women in

India must not talk about divorce. She wants Leila to lead happy and blissful life with her husband. She invites Krishna Leila's husband to lunch in the hope that such meeting might bring reconciliation. Krishna too does not want divorce. But Leila is bent upon wrecking her marriage just because divorce is fashionable in Europe. She thinks that mother is old fashioned.

Jhabvala is of course quite at home in a sophisticated Westernized family more than anywhere else. Progressive views and modern scientific attitudes clash with the conservative and traditional mother doesn't understand, Leila at last said. "she still thinks marriage bond is sacred and she made a school girl face of distaste to show how completely she dissociated herself from such an attitude (p. 21).

Her mother feels quite helpless against the obstinacy of daughter and takes recourse to praying that

"Leila is a snob Mother! Leila called from the drawing-room and was annoyed when her mother failed to hear her. She must be gossiping with the Servants again, she told bobo who who smiled indulgently and said, why not if it makes her happy.(p. 13)

The old lady calls Krishna at lunch in order to have some reconciliation. But Leila does not want any reconciliation She says

"Mother is often not dignified. For instance with Krishna it is very awkward for me when she is so soft for Krishna want it to be quite clear that --- everything is finished and there can be no reconciliation (p. 13).

What Jhabvala does in this story is to contrast two attitudes by the old Woman and the pseudo-modern symbolized by Leila. The story becomes poignant because it brings into focus the old women's predicament. She knows that her daughter is wrong and she would come to grief. She wants to save her but finds herself unable to do so. Jhabvala is well aware of the customs and traditions of Indian life. She also knows the rigid and harsh rule set by the society for a widow and if she wants to escape from those rules she is treated as a sinful person.

In this short story The Widow' Ruth Jhabvala tries to explore the life of a widow who struggles for escape from the traditional norms set for an Indian widowhood. Ruth Jhabvala though not belongs to India, she is well aware of the customs and traditions of India. She also knows how widow has to struggle both physically and emotionally in her lifetime.

Durga, a widow, the central character of the story around whom the other character moves like electrons is shown rubbing her shoulders against Indian customs and traditions. She is shown as an arrogant lady made by the wealth and independence left her by her dead husband flaunts convention and live a life of ease. Her husband also wants her to be brave and fearless lady. "When he was at his end he had poured into training her, teaching her making her strong" (P. 39). After his death the relatives begins to hover around her like the bees hovering around flower for honey. Her husband has left lot of wealth for her. The relatives have the intention that she must be treated as a widow and she must follow all the traditional norms of Widowhood.

They had wanted- yes. Indeed they had to Strip her silken coloured clothes and of her golden ornaments. The more orthodox among them had even wanted to shave her head. to reduce her diet to state bread and lentils. and deprive her from ever again tasting the sweet things of life to condemn her, in fact, to what perpetual mourning perpetual expiation, that was the proper lot of widows (p.41).

But she struggles against these rules set by the forefathers. In this story Jhabvala presents the co-existence of material and spiritual in the treatment of Durga. Durga rejected all these norms and she has some vague yearnings which she cannot understand. Her old aunt, Bhuaji, understands these vague yearnings and tells her that these feelings are the expressions of a thwarted material instinct, which in her case can find fulfilment only through a devotion to Lord Krishna. Durga believes her and starts worshipping in real earnest. Forming her own image of Krishna and dwelling on it day and night. Durga experiences sensations that are curiosity close to those of an orgasm as she has started worshipping Lord Krishna.

Sometimes when she was alone at night or lay on her bed in the hot silent afternoon thoughts her thoughts dwelling on Krishna she felt strange new stirrings Within her that were almost like illness with the tugging in the bowels and a melting in the thighs. And she trembled and wondered whether this was Krishna descending on her as Bhuaji promised he would showing her his passion, creeping into her ahlgreat god that he was - like a child or a lover, into her womb and into her breast (p.45).

Her relatives become much freer and happy. But their happiness is short lived. Durga sensations are short - lived. Like all artificially injected stimulants devotionalism fails her after a while. Her desire part sexual and part maternal for the dark young Krishna get transformed to a real boy the son of her tenants. Though, she rationalizes her need for the boy Govind as a yearning for her unborn son. The truth is that she sees him only in physical terms. Here she got frustration and nothing. Durga again starts worshipping Lord Krishna. Bhuaji whispers, "only pray with prayer he will surely come to you as a son and as a lover (p.47) Durga's disappointment at her rejection by Govind is taken immediate advantage by her relatives. They compel her to accept her fate to give up all her possessions and live the hard life of a widow for only in such was peace guaranteed and "the closer one followed the old traditions the saler and beter it was (p.-49).

Thus Jhabvala presents with all his hues and colors the reality of the Indian society and the struggles of a widow in the society. As in the earlier story 'The Widow' Jhabwala again in the story 'My First Marriage' brought together the major themes-struggle between the tradition and the modern and the gap between the materialistic and idealistic life views. In both the stories the central figure is that of a woman who attempts to assert her individuality in the world of stifling social norms

'My First Marriage' depicts a cross-generation struggle that has close affinity with the situation to which she cannot identify with her snobbish family and falls in love with a man from the

outside her Class and community. She is very much influenced by that man - Mr. M that she starts arguing with her parents. M is a highly philosophical type of man who wants to set the world on moral study.

He says, Education is no use without a firm moral basis (P 205) the young girl is very much attracted with his philosophy

Her story is taken beyond earlier stories with her elopement with her lover and her subsequent desertion. She loves Rahul but now she starts neglecting him when Rahul comes to meet her she made excuses when went home, would lie on the bed in my room and think. Rahul came and said 'I had a headache' (p.207). She thinks only of M. One day she flew away from house and marries him. They go to Niripat their they stayed with M's cousin. There she comes to know a strange news that M is already married and his wife name is Savitri

He is just a loafer it is only taking With him, they said, he is so dark and see! His hair isgrowing Grey like an oldman's. I pretended to be annoyed with them and that made them laugh more than ever One of them Said now it is very line, but just wait in the end her state will be same as Savitri' s(p.210).

The news came as a big surprise. She wants to write her parents about her stay at Niripat instead of writing to her parents she writes to Rahul "everything is for the best Rahul I often think about you. Please tell everyone that I am all right and happy" (p. 211). When her parents come to know about his first marriage. They want to dissolve their marriage. But the narrator says "that marriages are not made in the sight of God both Savitri and I were married to him. She there and I here (p. 216). Alter some time M starts meditation, a strange change come in his life. He spent most of his time meditation and does not care about anything else. He becomes very popular in the public even the narrator's mother starts coming to him.

People thinks that he is the mouthpiece of Gods message, "when people understand the deep meaning. They all exclaimed with pleasure and said that God was speaking through his mouth (p. 220).

One day he goes away from that place and nobody knows where he goes. The narrator comes back to her parent's house. Her return to the society is found so oppressive in a state of meek surrender to its norms reaffirms Ruth Jhabvala conviction that India assimilates her generation without much difficulty. An interesting sociological observation is contained in the observation that upper class Indian society is progressive enough to accommodate the old terms.

The dominant idea is here that of love, which is the primary requirement in the marriage according to western norms does not meet the case in India. However, westernized Indian society might become, however flexible its conventions, the basis of happiness in an Indian marriage. The novelist seems to be saying lies in the social, cultural and economic compatibility of the partners 'Like must marry Like' is the authors conclusion in My First Marriage. On the whole Jhabvala shows her full understanding of the Indian society and the changes that were taking place in this transitional period.

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