



Contemporaneity of Language and Literature in the Robotized Millennium

Vol: 2(1), 2020

REST Publisher

ISBN No: 978-81-936097-3-6

Website: <http://restpublisher.com/book-series/cllrm/>

Cross Generation Assimilation in Jhabvala's *To Whom She Will*

¹Saranya Devi. P, ²Dr. G. Keerthi

¹Department of English, Kongu Engineering College, Perundurai – 638 060

²Department of English, Government Arts and Science College, Komarapalayam - 648 183

saranyadevipradeep@gmail.com

Modern fiction in English is peculiarly conscious of its technique and tools. The technique of presenting problems, the nature and the kinds of problems, have been beyond the scope. Ruth Praver Jhabvala has presented east-west perspective in her novels in her wider socio-economic and political perspectives and is therefore, fully reflected in her works in a big country like India which is generally regarded as not one country but many countries containing not one people. During her stay in India, she assimilated all the Indian experiences in terms of Indian customs, Indian cultures, Indian languages, Indian food habits, Indian joint family system, Indian dresses and Indian dishes. Jhabvala has her own style and technique to portray the predicament of individuals in their relationship with their families. The East-West encounter between the boss and servant, but on an equal level and she gives us in her fiction the experiences of European women married to Indians or of Indian women married to Europeans who are confronted with the inevitable situation of the Hindu joint families. Their differences have been presented with considerable power and acute sense of understanding. The interaction between two cultures, European and Indian, seems to be her forte. The central figure of the novel "To Whom She Will" is an apparently a tragic figure called Amrita who was in her last teens, a very suitable marriage age for girls in modern India. She is a fatherless child and only granddaughter of her maternal grandfather, an aristocratic barrister, Rai Bahadur Tara Chand. She was a graduate from the most the most prestigious women's college in Delhi. Amrita takes up the job of a radio- announcer to while away her leisure time. At the radio station she liked a boy-announcer named Hari and started loving him in a view of getting married. Hari on the contrary was a timid, traditional boy who knows that he was not free to choose a girl of his own choice. The love of these two characters reflects in the contrast attitudes characterizing the contemporary hindu society which was divided into tradition and modernity. The central theme of the novel was the problem of free and arranged in modern urban society and the clash between the old and young generation. She also writes that the main consideration in arranged marriages in India is the caste system. She made it clear that whether it is the educated modern westernized society or the simple lower middle class society, they prefer to get a girl from their own caste and community. Though the young generation likes to follow the westernization and believes in free love and marriage, ultimately they give in to the wishes of their parents and marry the girl or the boy their family choose for them. The love between Amrita and Hari was written in a humorous way by Jhabvala. Amrita asserts her love in a dramatic manner for Hari Sahni in the studio. Her grandfather who was against their marriage wishes to send Amrita to England but she prefers to stay with Hari rather than to England. Hari who was unable to understand Amrita tells her:

"You give up England for me", he said,
"Your love for me is great. I am unworthy
.....". "I am", he repeated sadly.
"Who am I? Hari Sahni, an announcer in
Hindi section. I draw only Rupees 300/-
a month. I live in a rented house paying
Rupees 50/- rent. I am nobody. I am
nothing"¹

and this feeling of being nobody reveals Hari character. Hari has been described as a weak character. Though Hari has been portrayed as a weak character, declares his love for Amrita. He is unable to face the opposition of his family. His family did not approve their marriage as the Bengali girl cannot fit into their family. Jhabvala brings in the issue of caste and community. Punjabis and Bengalis are considered to be poles apart. Their dress, food, language and social customs, everything is different. Hence they find a nice girl named Sushila Anand, a girl from their own caste and community. He protests mildly that he was in love with Amrita and went to the extent of saying that, it was not right for him to marry Sushila. The whole matter was settled when Suri his brother-in-law said to Hari:

"It is only a game and we all play it.
After marriage you will forget and you
will laugh at yourself for taking it
seriously."²

Jhabvala brings out the ironical conception of love in India and on the other hand she aptly proves the victory of tradition over modernity. She proves that India is still a backward place how much younger generation strives to break the shackles of old traditions and customs. Amrita on the other hand has been portrayed as a strong character when compared to Hari. Though ultimately she gives into the wishes of her mother and agrees to marry Krishna, their paying guest, yet she fights for her love more bravely. She not only faces the opposition of her mother Radha, who all along disapproves Hari, but also her grandfather, Pandit Ram Bahadur Chand. He is not quite averse to her marrying outside the community and is opposed to match with Hari on grounds, which are primarily social and cultural. He feels that Hari as a match for Amrita is total misfit in every way. Hari appears to him as a king of 'autodidact' having an untutored mind, and so he opposes the proposal and tells Amrita:

.....In your case, the margin of discrepancy between the two families, the young man's and yours: is too wide. It is a gulf which I cannot find it in my conscience to allow you to bridge.³

And later declares:

I have told her that she cannot marry this boy. She must regard that as final.⁴

However Amrita does not take this as the final word. She still thinks of the ways in which she can fulfill her love. As against Hari's feeble protest Amrita's strong and open protest is clearly portrayed. She goes to Hari and tells him:

.....But I do not care about what grandfather says: believe me. Hari, I don't care what any of them say. Please believe me. Please. What does my family matter? You know I would give up everyone and everything for you.⁵

This reveals Amrita's character and ironically presents a sharp contrast to the character of Hari. Amrita is strong and ready to give up her family, money and status for the sake of her love. She then even goes to the extent of asking help from Tarla's husband Vazir Dayal. She plans to marry Hari in England where there would be no one to oppose them. She is so enthusiastic about their plans for going to England that she sends Krishna to Hari, to tell him of her plans. But Hari's response is against her hopes. He turns out to be weak character. V.A. Shahane puts it:

He did not sound certain of himself, is the key not only of Hari's character and personality, but of the entire narrative and thematic structure of the novel itself. The uncertainty, the instability, and the waywardness of Hari's emotional responses form the crux of the problem Amrita is confronted with.⁶

Jhabvala once again juxtaposes the two sections of Indian society. She proves that the lower middle class was still weak and likes to stick to the traditions, whereas the modern Indian section at least has the courage to announce the disapproval of these old traditions and customs. The younger generation like Amrita in the upper middle class educated society, are courageous and emancipated, the older generation to a great extent remains the same. Jhabvala, during her stay of three decades in this country, wrote about India, as a European and for the Europeans, yet, she has a place of her own contribution to Anglo-Indian fiction which would always remain incomparable and unique. The Indian image that she projected in her novels, will always be remembered by her readers. Her deep understanding, keen observation, and deep insight into this unknown society make her a novelist worthy of careful study and analysis. Jhabvala's works are like a screen on which the readers can see thirty years of post-independence India projected in many of its hues and colours.

References

1. Jhabvala, Ruth Praver. *To Whom She Will*. London: Penguin Books, 1985, p. 92-93
 2. Jhabvala, Ruth Praver. *To Whom She Will*. London: Penguin Books, 1985, p. 117
 3. Jhabvala, Ruth Praver. *To Whom She Will*. London: Penguin Books, 1985, p. 35
 4. Jhabvala, Ruth Praver. *To Whom She Will*. London: Penguin Books, 1985, p. 75
 5. Jhabvala, Ruth Praver. *To Whom She Will*. London: Penguin Books, 1985, p. 29
 6. Shahane V.A. *Ruth Praver Jhabvala*, p.40
 7. Jhabvala, Ruth Praver. *To Whom She Will*, London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1985.
 8. Charavathi, Aruna. *Ruth Praver Jhabvala: A Study in Empathy and Exile*, New Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1998. xii, 285.
 9. Agarwala, D.C. *To Whom She Will: An Interpretation*, *Explorations in Modern Indian English Fiction*, R.K. Dhawan (Ed.) New Delhi: Bahri Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1982, 214-222.
- Gooneratne, Yasmine. *To Whom She Will or Amrita: 1955-1956, Silence, Exile and Cunning: The Fiction of Ruth Praver Jhabvala*. Yasmine Gooneratne. Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1983, 31-70.