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TWO PASSAGES TOWARDS INDIA: STUDY OF HEAT AND DUST AND A PASSAGE TO INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Literature in general and the novel in specific have widened spaces horizontally with the passage of the time. Literature of any era reflects the social, political as well as financial conditions of that time. In ancient times the relationship between two countries was only casual, occasional and was mainly sustained by trade and business. During the seventeenth century, a purely political reason, i.e. colonial expansion, forced the Indo-European for direct contacts on a long term basis. The Anglo-Indian tradition of the novel, though appeared later, has given literary shape to the Indo- British relationship. During the post-world war era the new waves of migration to different parts of the world, and also the post-decolonization developments gave the phenomenon a further momentum. The Present Paper focuses the response of two different Anglo-Indian writers towards India through their works—Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* and E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*.

Keywords : Passages, Response, Heat, Dust

During the British Raj, the British presence in India was a political reality and many of the authors were either directly or indirectly working at a conditioned position in terms of the attitudes they reflected towards the British colonialism and India; whereas Ruth Jhabvala and many others who came to India did not have any political obligation. It is simply a question of personal choice on their part and they worked under a totally different socio-cultural environment.

However, the question of cross-cultural relationship or interaction remains as equally a valid issue as it has been before.

Ruth Jhabvala's characters encounter India physically as well as metaphysically. At the physical level, India, its geography, its social life, form a quantitative factor in the novels. The characters in her novel freely move, see India's relics, and often take Indian foods. They react to India's

backwardness and heat and dust, they befriend Indians and often marry them. Metaphysically they respond to Indian art, religion and philosophy. It is not only the outward life of India with which they are familiar with, but also the inner life of the people affects them. *Heat and Dust* openly depicts face-to-face interactions of people belonging to two cultures and thereby the novel's one of the major themes happens to be one of the modern human issues, i.e. 'cross-cultural encounter'. Ruth moves slightly away from her interest in India and Indians to an interest in the effect India has on Westerners who live in or visit India. . During this phase Ruth Jhabvala consistently interrogates the way India acts on the Westerners, particularly women. The unanswered question she repeatedly raises in her writings is whether or not it is desirable for Europeans to live in India. This phase of her writing is marked by a systematic interrogation, appropriation, and rewriting of E.M. Forster's celebrated novel (*A Passage to India* 1924).

Jhabvala lived in India much longer than E. M. Forster. Her marriage in Indian family gave her access to Indian society. Her best work explores the acute inwardness in the depiction of Indian social life that is difficult

not to consider her as an insider who at the same time enjoys the privilege of being an outsider in a oblivious sense. She says in a rare fragment of autobiography, in her 1979s Neil Gunn Fellowship lecture about 'disinheritance', "once a refugee, always a refugee, a writer without any ground of being out of which to write: really blown about from country to country, culture to culture, till I feel till I am nothing" (qtd. Bhabhani 79).

Jhabvala has won the Booker prize for her eighth novel, *Heat and Dust* (1975) in which a hippy narrator in 1970s retraces India and stumblingly replicates the steps of her grandmother Olivia, an English bride in 1920s disgraced by an affair with a Nawab. Olivia Douglas was a central protagonist who was the wife of government English officer Douglas Rivers. It presents two different periods i.e. 1920 and 1970 which interwoven the two stories of women who explores two different shades of her experiences in India.

Heat and Dust, depicts the character from two different worlds India and England who are culturally different. Olivia is an aesthete and observed with the stereotypical image of Indian prince. She is a boarded colonial wife who falls in love with the local Nawab of

Khatm. The grand opulence of the palace and the sumptuous royal dinner satisfies Olivia's aesthetic sense. Olivia. The story of Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* is told by the narrator, who is the granddaughter of Olivia Douglas and repeats the same story. But these two women's are different in their approach and attitude towards Indian men. It presents two different periods i.e. 1920s and the 1970s.

It seems that the marriage of Olivia and Douglas have had been a mechanical one. The Indian Heat has kept Olivia mostly inside and makes her life a secluded one with exhaustive loneliness. Many times she ignored her loneliness and moves into the world of imagination.

Felt she had, at last in India, come to the right place and instantly got interested in the Nawab and she realized that here at last was one person in India to be interested in her the way she was used to (Jhabvala 17).

Olivia is different from many other female characters of Jhabvala. It is because of her different attitude and temperament to India. However, she holds drastically opposite views on India and the Indian culture. Wind

of the British community was suspecting that Nawab is the dacoits but she doesn't believe. Instead, she tries her best to prove that the Nawab is a gentlemen and he is still as good as any Englishman too.

Philosophically, Olivia tries to sort out the situation and said it is natural, I mean, to want to go with the person you care for most in the world. Not to want to be alive any more if he wasn't. (Heat and Dust 59).

Jhabvala through her two female characters present the possible relationship between India and British Forster too discusses the possibility of interaction between the East and the West. Literature forms a major part in the interaction between nations. The concept of the West on the East is that they are simply barbarians, uncultured and illiterates and meant to be ruled and controlled. The West considers the East as orientals and in literal an image of the "Other". The basic idea of orientalism is that east is what is not west but it is mysterious, holy, dark, strange, attractive and barbaric. In their concept and perception, East is unreasonable and people there are not themselves and therefore need to be ruled. Right from the beginning till the end, the

novel *A Passage to India*, picturizes India as a holy nation, known for its ageless history, ruled by the British people (West). The meeting of Aziz and Mrs. Moore display the distinction between two countries and civilization, in general the Eastern and the Western civilization, and their upper hands of one over the other. West cannot identify, understand and agree with the perfection of the East. The British fail to agree with India and Indians that they are perfect in their own style and tradition, on which the West (British) is just enforcing its power and strength in a brutal manner.

In the novel, the ruling Anglo-Indians, think of their rule as a burden nobly borne by them in order to civilize the native barbarians. This imperialistic prejudice results in the division of the rulers and the ruled, the Whites and the coloured. Forster pours out his own conception of colonized India based on his several visits to India. The description of nature, the caves, and the people with reference to their culture shows the hegemony of the West on the East. While Aziz talks to Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested, they converse about the Mughal emperors, Babur, Humayun, Akbar and Aurangzeb. "Akbar never repented of the new religion he invented instead of the Holy

Koran." *A Passage to India – A Passage between East and West Socio-Cultural Redemption in Comparative Literature* (Forster 49)

The novel talks about the possibility of friendship between an Englishman and an Indian, which will bring the possibility of friendship between the East and the West. The rulers do not have real sympathy for the suffering of the people meant to be ruled. They simply oppress the natives with their language, showy culture and influencing tactics. When Aziz and Fielding meet one another again in the last section of the novel, there is no joyous reunion between the friends. Even when the misunderstanding is cleared, the conversation goes badly and the meeting ends with a complete separation between the two men. Aziz is paradoxically the instrument of reconciliation between himself and the British people. In the last section, Aziz and Fielding start talking frankly and intimately about politics. They realize that their characters and way of life have changed radically for them to be able to continue as close friends. They have never been closer than now; and they speak more as an Englishman and an Indian than as Fielding and Aziz; both are angry and excited. Aziz begins to shout, Fielding

mocks him and Aziz is enraged. They bring their horses nearer to embrace each other, but the horses swerve apart. This suggests that sub-human India is hostile to inter-racial friendships and therefore their union is transitory.

On the whole Jhabvala through the characters like Olivia and Narrator and Forster through Aziz and Fielding present the notion that the peaceful union and perfect understanding or friendship between East and West is highly impossible because both are distinctive in their own character and feature which is far beyond the acceptance.

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