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A STUDY OF THE CULTURAL CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE IN JHABVALA'S *TO WHOM SHE WILL*

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Abstract:

Marriage is an analytical and critical study of To Whom She Will. Culture is the systems of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people. The position that the ideas, meanings, beliefs and values people learn as members of society determines human nature. The interaction between two cultures, European and Indian, is Ruth Praver Jhabvala's strong point. Jhabvala's first novel To Whom She Will bears the central problem of arranged versus the romantically-based marriage. In the earlier novels the writer abundantly demonstrates the differences based on Indian culture and the western culture: In India marriages are arranged in marriage. In the western concept of marriages, it is moreover a love marriage or choice marriage where parents, society, tradition do not play very active role. Amrita Chakravarty, the young protagonist has been brought - up in an anglicized way by her grandfather Rai Bahadur Tara Chand. Amrita romances with Hari Sahani, her colleague at the All India Radio. When Radha, Rai Bahadur's daughter tells him of Amrita's arranged marriage with Lady Ram Prasad's son in the middle of the novel, he vehemently opposes her idea. Krishna, the other character who likes Hari is partially a product of his upbringing. He takes his education in England and joins as a lecturer in Delhi University. This article telling and that is the disinvent nature of her. She presents with utmost care the Indian tradition, culture, civilization, manners, systems, pattern of living and values.

Keywords: *Marriage, culture, optimistic, Indian and Westerners, love, mutual understanding.*

Culture refers to the pattern of human activity and the symbols that give significance to these activities. It manifests itself in terms of the art, literature, costumes, customs, languages, religion and religious rituals. The people and their pattern of life make up the culture of a region. Cultures vary in the different parts of the world. Culture is the systems of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people. The position that the ideas, meanings, beliefs and values people learn as members of society determines human nature. Optimistic versions of cultural determinism place no limits on the abilities of human beings to do or to be whatever they want. Some anthropologists suggest that there is no universal 'right way' of being human. "Right way" is almost always "our way" that "our way" in one society almost never corresponds to "our way" in any other society. Proper attitude of an informed human being could only be that of tolerance.

The optimistic version of this theory postulates that human nature being infinitely malleable; human being can choose the ways of life. The pessimistic version maintains that people are what they are conditioned to be; this is something over which they have no control. Human beings are passive creatures and do whatever their culture tells them to do. This explanation leads to behaviorism that locates the causes of human behavior in a realm that is totally beyond human control. The interaction between two cultures, European and Indian, is Ruth Praver Jhabvala's strong point. It forms the substances and also shapes the process by which her personal experience in India is transformed into fiction. Jhabvala usually writes about the rising commercial bourgeoisie from north India, mainly in and around Delhi and

her characters, chosen from the social class and setting she knows the best, are sophisticated as well as unsophisticated people.

In *To Whom She Will*, Jhabvala has presented a contrast between different societies or communities very largely in terms of social behavior. Amrita, a fatherless child, is the only grand - daughter of an aristocratic barrister Rai Bahadur Tara Chand. After graduation, she takes up a job of a radio announcer and cultivates a liking for an announcer named Hari and starts loving him with a view to getting married. But Hari is a traditional boy who is not free to contract a love for him. So he, without intimating Amrita, gets married in traditional manner to girl of his own class and community. When Amrita gets to know about Hari's marriage, she transfers her love to Krishna Sen Gupta, her lodger. Radha, Amrita's mother and daughter of Rai Bahadur, is full of motherly concern, demanding total involvement in Amrit's life and affairs, and is prepared to employ whatever strategies are required in order to maintain her authority over Amrita.

Jhabvala is thoroughly familiar with life and manners of her adopted country, which endows her with unique insight into the typical traits of Indians. She presents with utmost care the Indian tradition, culture, civilization, manners, systems, pattern of living and values. Jhabvala's first novel *To Whom She Will* bears the central problem of arranged versus the romantically-based marriage. The parents fix the engagement of a bride and a bridegroom. Unlike the western concept of marriage, the choice, feelings and love for each other is not taken into consideration. In arranged marriage caste of a boy and a girl plays a conclusive role. They should belong to same caste. The economical background of each also is considered absolute in match making. The parents of girl have to offer big amount of dowry to the bridegroom. There is a strong hold of traditions in Indian system of marriage.

In the western concept of marriages, it is moreover a love marriage or choice marriage where parents, society, tradition do not play very active role. The feelings of love, mutual understanding, and consideration for each other have place in this kind of marriage. The boy or a girl above twenty one years of age is free to select their life partners. Education plays very decisive role in this kind of marriage. In the western culture the marriage of their children is not considered the duty of their parents. In Indian culture, the parents consider their right and motto to get their children married and settled. There is a clash of personality if an Indian boy or a girl tries to break strong bonds of family and follows choice marriage.

In *To Whom She Will*, Amrita Chakravarty, the young protagonist has been brought - up in an anglicized way by her grandfather Rai Bahadur Tara Chand. Amrita romances with Hari Sahani, her colleague at the All India Radio. Hari is simple, unspoiled and traditional. Amrita and Hari love each other and want to marry in spite of their conflicting ways. But Rai Bahadur disapproves of Amrita's love affair with Hari, who belongs to a different community with poor Punjabi refugee background. Radha, Amrita's mother follows Amrita like a shadow in her selection of a boy for the marriage. According to Radha, love marriages do not lead to happiness and to her happiness is calculated in terms of material prosperity and luxury. She has a wrong fear that Amrita's wrong choice would ruin her dignity in modern society. Under the influence of her widowed mother and her grandfather, Amrita relents and reconciles to the notion of marrying Krishna Sen Gupta, a Bengali lecturer. Hari is emotionally forced by the protective love of his old fashioned parents to accept their proposal for an arranged marriage with Sushila, a girl of his community. Thus, ironically, both Amrita and Hari are married to parents arranged for them. Hari marries Sushila not for love but for social compromise.

When Radha, Rai Bahadur's daughter tells him of Amrita's arranged marriage with Lady Ram Prasad's son in the middle of the novel, he vehemently opposes her idea. His dreadful reactions are: "It is shameful", he said after a short pause, that you do not allow your child the liberty which your parents allowed you; that you should revert to - the primitive custom that I took pains to eradicate from our family" (Jhabvala Whom 179). This remark shows the discrepancy between his thinking and deeds; he neither

permits Amrita to select a suitable match for herself nor allows Radha to choose a bridegroom for Amrita to select a suitable through selection. Once again we find deep-rooted materialism and strange views on marriage. Rai bahadur remains a flat character, hardly adding to the plot of the novel.

Krishna, the other character in *To Whom She Will*, who likes Hari is partially a product of his upbringing. He takes his education in England and joins as a lecturer in Delhi University. When he returns from England his inherited idealism leads him towards disenchantment with the Independent India. He hated the uncomplaining poverty, the apathy he saw all around him, in the streets, the bazaars, on the steps of the temples... He hated the beggars and the insolence with which they made it clear that they belonged to this society, had every right to exist in it. ... He hated... the complacency of his own class, the evil servant min, the stoid satisfaction with the routine work, with salary and position for ever fixed, with yawning pleasures in once English clubs.... He hated the women because they were ignorant, innocent and submissive.... He hated - hated everything; even his parents because it was thy who had made him come back to this (46-47)

His isolation in his own county as shown from the exposition of the novel, leads to disharmony in his personality with regard to cultural relationship. Krishna's abomination for India gradually settles into acceptance, which moreover reduces the discord from the point of view of Krishna and cultural contrasts. England now appears to be "brown place" and not a reality. He writes of his intention to Amrita, declaring his love for her. Hence there is no doubt or ambiguity in Krishna's love for Amrita. His love based on Western concept. The continual disparities of Amrita's love and the opposition by both her and Hari's family get another setback when Amrita meets Hari's sister Prema. She is quite mistaken in understanding Amrita. She before meeting Prema in her house expects supreme simplicity but she is awfully disappointed to see Prema so lavishly dressed and her house arranged with admirable symmetry. The reason is that Prema fancies Amrita to be utterly rich and modernized in her manners. Prema vehemently refuses Amrita as suitable match for her brother. After meeting Amrita, Prema declares Amrita to be a proud and conceited girl, and rather stupid girl without feelings. When Amrita firmly states her case to Krishna, the social and cultural tension rises to its climax. Amrita cries out her agonized reaction, "Everybody is always telling us to be emancipated, to be like European women but when we try to be they are shocked and say we are behaving badly" (49).

There are series of events and incidents confronting Amrita's marriage to Hari. These events-Amrita's family conferences, tricks employed by Radha and Prema, grandfather's insistence on sending her to England, test Amrita's love and present traditional traits. She makes a plan to go away to England with Hari. She takes the initiative firmly with characteristic gentleness, expresses her individual point of view very boldly to Rai Bahadur. When Amrita opposes or rather challenges her grandfather's views, we find the generation gap widening between them due to the difference of opinions regarding love marriage or arranged marriage. The protagonists of the novel Amrita and Hari's parents scheme to prevent their marriage, considering them immature for the selection of suitable life partners. The subject of marriage is very debatable in the novel. The theme rotates round the subject of marriage which is enhanced by the proper selection of characters and setting. The end of the novel resolves the controversial problem of marriage, regarding which type of marriage is largely conducive to happiness. The happy ending of the novel reveals that arranged marriages of Hari with Sushila, and Amrita with Krishna bring happiness. The Oriental concept of love i.e. the idea of arranged marriage overshadows the Western concept of love in the novel. The mode of exhibiting the East-West cultural and social encounter is made highly comical through characters and ironical situations in the novel. At the end of the novel when Amrita hears of Hari's marriage to Sushila Anand, she diverts her love to Krishna Sen Gupta. A letter from Krishna resolves and clears all the uncertainties: "Amrita paced up and down, too excited to stay still. She held Krishna's letter in her hand, six pages of it beginning 'Amrita'.....pluck a flower from the hedge and, inwardly bubbling over with

laughter, stick into her hair” (236) Amirta accepts Krishna's love considering him a suitable match offered by her family. Jhabvala has skillfully represented the clash in personality which is the result of her exposure to two cultures.

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