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## **Sex and marriage in the fiction of Ruth Praver Jhabvala and its impact on Indian family life**

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### **Abstract**

Ruth Praver Jhabvala has achieved an International reputation as an Indian novelist. Her most of the novels deal with the themes like love, and marriage in the middle class society. Though she is a European, her marriage to an Indian architect and stay in India has given her deep insight into India's social, political, religious economic, moral and cultural life. In almost all the novels of Ruth Praver Jhabvala, there is neither a true portrayal of the process of love transforming into marriage nor the true deep love after marriage is reflected. Her main aim is to create a fiction where the transitional phase of post-modern nature of Indian family is depicted with the interacting module of east-west superimposition. The present paper is an exploration of her views on sex and marriage in her fictions and its impact on Indian family life.

**Keywords:** Exploration, transitional, superimposition

### **Introduction**

Sex is a natural urge while marriage is a social force. Both sex and marriage are tied together. The institution of marriage based on the social system to satiate the inborn urge of sex is of utmost importance. The concept of marriage is age-old and has been popular and prevalent in human society from time immemorial. Marriage thus is practically a universal social tie though thinkers like Bacon and Bernard Shaw consider marriage to be an impediment to and hurdle in the way of success; it is regarded as an obstacle in all great adventures and activities of life. "He that hath wife and children hath given hostage to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief" [1].

The principle of marriage and its practices based on the free choice of the boy and the girl are popular and prevalent only in the Western world. In India, marriage is not merely an informal affair between a boy and a girl getting married but it is 'an event which involves the entire kin groups of both spouses. It may be used for strengthening already existing relationships or for creating new alliances but in any case the decision to marry a particular person rarely rests with a boy or a girl' [2]. Marriage in India is a sacred bond to tie truly two souls together. It has not only a social domain but also a mental and spiritual urge to merge one heart with the other. It remains an infinite bond of two souls from Life to life and birth to birth.

The idea of marriage, even in the West, based on romantic love is a recent one and it was not a fully recognized system till yesterday. In India with the impact of the western ideas and sense of social awakening of the individual for his fundamental rights, drastic changes are fast taking place in all walks of social, political and economic life. The social institution of marriage based on romantic love and personal freedom in the selection of the life partner are slowly but surely having their way in the minds of youthful and energetic boys and girls who have started putting a question mark on the wisdom and sanctity of the age-old institution of marriage. There is a constant conflict going on between the individual of today and the orthodox and tradition ridden institution of marriage. Jhabvala is a past master writer in dealing with the social problems in her novels. She has artistically and realistically dealt at length with the problem of marriage and sex in her novels; mainly the two novels *To Whom She Will* and *The Nature of Passion*.

A study of the institution of marriage in relation to the social set up of the Indian family life must have appeared to Jhabvala a very striking theme, That is why in her very first novel *To*

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Whom She Will Jhabvala has gathered material from this very aspect of the Indian life. In this novel the tale of family match—making is told with delightful details and gentle irony. It is a love story in which tradition and not love wins the ground in the end. Everybody gets married not traditionally right partner the Punjabi to the Punjabi and the Bengali to the Bengali. The tender but powerfully written love story is set against the beating background of the present day New Delhi, The novelist uses her pen with a sharp sense of delicacy, presents very life like pictures of the modern Indian domestic life but she mainly confines to “the emergence of Indian society from its traditional orthodox shakes to modernity through many conflicts and tunnoils” [3].

Amrita and Hari, the two major characters show the contrasting opinions about the institution of the arranged marriage. The central theme of the novel—arranged versus romantically based marriages—is suggested in the very beginning through the epigraph which follows:

For if she bids a maiden still she gives herself to whom she will; Then marry her in tender age so warns the haven-begotten sage [4].

The traditionally blind obedience to the decision of the family in the matrimonial matters is depicted through the characters—Hari and Sushila, Hari, the unheroic hero is emotionally squashed under the protective love of his family. It is through the character of Hari that the novelist has shown the ideological control of family over the individual who is bound to follow its standards and norms. He hails from a typical middle class family which has settled in Delhi after the partition. He is a weak man who finds it difficult to protect either against the wishes and whims of his family or of his beloved Amrita. He lacks courage and confidence, self-determination and will power and is overpowered by his emotional falls in love with Amrita, his co-worker and colleague in the Delhi Radio Station and has a desire to marry her but as a laggard love he finds it impossible to go against the wishes of his parents. He practically does nothing for the fulfilment of his romantic love. Not to talk of any efforts on his part, he cannot even make up his mind to go to England even when his beloved’s uncle is ready to bear all the expenses.

In Indian society an individual is blindly bound to the orthodox family against which he cannot raise his voice or protest in any way. The strong hold of family ties on an individual is well noticed in the scene in which Krishna Sen Gupta, informs Hari of Amrita’s plan of going to England and marrying him there. The dialogue and discussion of Hari with Sen Gupta shows Hari’s infirmity born of the ties of a traditional Indian family:

“If I had so much money....” Hari began. “You would go to England with Amrita”, Krishna took him up. “Yes”, Hari had to agree. “Well then”, Krishna said, “You have the money now and you can do as you wish. Both of you can do as you wish”.

Hari’s reply here is very significant:

If only it were so easy, he said licking the empty spoon. “But how can I leave Delhi? My whole family is here. them”. On further provocation he comes to the point and lets out the exact reason:

“it is that: my family are arranging a marriage for me, that is why I cannot go [5].”

Hari’s reply here clearly indicates as to how difficult it is for the Indians to have self-determination and self-opinion in

matrimonial matters. When Krishna Sen Gupta asks him if he cared more for his family than for his beloved, Hari very cleverly and quite intentionally avoids for this sacrifice the family at the altar of love and shows the utter helplessness of the individual against the deeply rooted force of orthodoxy and tradition. His mother’s prediction that he would marry only the girl “whom his family will choose for him, [6]” come out to be quite true. The hold of his family proves to be so strong upon him that he ultimately deserts his beloved and marries Sushila, the girl chosen for him by his family. Perhaps Jhabvala intended to present through Hari, an indecisive character like Hamlet confronted with the problem of “to be or not to be” torn between the demands of the family and the personal fulfilment. His dilemma is stated as this “Decide, always nowadays from all sides it was decided. [7]”

Though it is true that the matter of decisions in the case of Hari is not petty yet his character is too weakly drawn to attain the grandeur of a character like that of him. Moreover, he fails to bring out the real conflict between tradition and individuality from the sincerity of love towards Amrita, The song of a Garman singer interests him more than any love talk with his so-called beloved. He likes to go for a dinner instead of meeting his beloved. He is like a romantic lover who brags of having sacrificed every thing for the sake of his lady love. He presents himself as a Romeo ready to cross the ties and pass the prying eyes of the society, pluck the stars from the heaven or to climb the cliffs but really speaking he is afraid of going out in rain, lest he should catch a cold. Hari feels that being in love is fine and fantastic, only if it were not complicated. The fact is that Hari has never felt love, in the real sense of the word and had only been deceiving himself by imagining himself to be in love. The self-illusion alone is responsible for his demands of marriage with Amrita. Hence, his dilemma to be with his family or with his beloved is only self-deceiving.

Hari’s final surrender to the decision of his family confirms fully to the traditions of the Indian institutions of arranged marriage which allow no freedom to the boy or to the girl going to be married. The matter of obedience in the matrimonial question has also been artistically presented in Rabindra Nath Tagore’s novel *The Wreck*. In this novel Tagore shows how the young student Ramesh, in love with his friend’s sister Hemamalini, Leaves his beloved abruptly though not without pain when his father summons him to go with him and to prepare for the marriage to a girl sought out for him. Ramesh refuses to accept such a union though but outwardly like a man with bandaged eyes accepts his father’s decision which fully accords with the age old Hindu tradition. But whereas Ramesh in Tagore’s novel is heart-broken and soul-stricken at the arranged marriage, Hari, in *To Whom She Will*, feels, he had never been so happy in all his life [8]. Equally submissive and fully obedient in the matrimonial decision is Sushila, the girl to whom Hari married at last-. She has no choice of her own and like a tonga tied slave or a mouth-muzzled cow, is driven away to be happy with any person chosen by her family. Behaving in this way, both Hari and Sushila prove that they are truly Indians in spirit. Vadiya, Hari’s friend, is quite justified in calling Hari, “the true son of India”.

Jhabvala has shown characters who conform to Indian traditions and institutions, on the other like Jane Austen, she goes to the extent of characters who are individualistic and expressive in their attitudes to social problems and

especially those concerning 'matrimony and the choice of a husband or a wife. Amrita, the heroine of the novel, is one such character. She typifies self-determination in marriage. She is a practical and sensible girl who is in revolt against her dominating mother Radha. An arranged marriage would simply mean disaster for her. Having an individualistic personality, she is not ready to pay any attention to the opinion of her family. She continues meeting Hari even after she has been forbidden to do so by her grandfather Pandit Ram Bahadur who is consulted in all family matters and whose word of judgement is accepted as final. He had frankly told Amrita that the gulf between her family and the family of Hari was too wide to be bridged. But Amrita is very self-willing, so much so that she acts as she desires. She tells Hari,

"what does my family matter ? You know. I would give up every one and everything for you. Nothing matters, only you" [9].

Her own family as well as that of Hari is equally insignificant for her. After meeting Prema, Hari's sister, she shows the same spirit of caring a fig for any one and persuades even Hari to have such an attitude:

"But O Hari, even if your sister does not like me. Even if your whole family do not like, what will it matter? They cannot come between us. They are no more important than my family. They will never be able to separate us" [10]."

In Amrita, Jhabvala has portrayed an individualistic character totally against the Indian tradition according to which "at no stage can a woman act independently—as a child she is guided by her father, as a wife by her husband, in old age by her son." Amrita is self-willed, bold' and active Amrita defies her mother and does not stop going to the Radio Station in spite of her mother's requests and threats. She will not accompany her mother at any cost, if she does not desire. On the other hand, if she wishes she can go alone to see her grand father. Since she is shown as a strong individual from the beginning, her decision and efforts to go to England with Hari do not seem inconsistent with her behaviour. From her side, no stone is left unturned for the fulfilment of her romantic dream—marriage with Hari. The failure of her plan is merely because of luck or change. If the question of money had not choked her, she would have definitely gone to London and so would have married the man of her own choice. Moreover, she does not marry Hari because a new realization has dawned up on her that in her berets of heart she had been loving Krishna Sen Gupta rather than Hari. And this realization of love for Krishna seems to be a drawback in her character portrayal. Throughout the story, she had been trying her level best to be united with Hari. How all of a sudden, Krishna's Letter makes her realize that she loved Krishna and not Hari. The reader fails to understand.

The end of the story is indeed very significant Perhaps by allowing Hari marry Sushila and Amrita marry Krishna Sen Gupta, Jhabvala seems to suggest that tradition is too much for Indians and traditions of society or perhaps the novelist wants to show an ironic reconciliation between the two notions of marriage. Whatever may be the intentions of the novelist, the events which might have been tragic for the hero and heroine turn out to be comic and pleasant in Amrita's own choice. However, the novelist's, idea of marriage is ambiguous and perhaps intentionally so. Nowhere has she favored either modern individualism or old institutions, but has very wisely reserved her judgement.

And therein lies the merit of the novel. Like a good work of art it merely suggests but hammers down nothing.

The novelist has presented not only the conflict between the social institutions of marriage and individualism but has also referred to some social customs associated with marriage. For example, references to communal duty to caste which demands strict adherence to it hardly permits inter-caste relationships. Hari feels that he will be happier with Sushila than with Amrita because the former belongs to his own community and once her etiquettes and manners will not trouble his two daughters to marry outside his community and he realizes that the consequences have not been quite favourable. Similarly in *The Nature of Passion* Jhabvala once again lays stress on this community feeling among Indians. She shows how the members of Lalaji's family, especially the elders totally disapprove of Nimmi's action of having an affair with a Parsi boy—a boy belonging to a different community. The whole family can never develop good relations with Lalaji's daughter-in-law Kanta who hails from a different community. Lalaji's sister always taunts him for allowing his son to marry outside their community and whenever Kanta fails to perform her duty as a daughter-in-law, her behaviour is explained only in this connection," I know very well what happens when people marry outside their community" [11]. "

In the novels of Jhabvala the rituals and rites, ceremonies and functions of marriage in India and various complexities involved with them, are beautifully described. His approach to life and concern with society are down-to-earth. This keeps her detached and makes her art lifelike and a lively experience for the readers both English and Indian.

To Jhabvala as to the Western world, marriage is the way of world's world—without-end bargain', and something which, is worldly. Unlike the Victorians, the modern European. has little faith in and no regard for arranged marriages. This is not so in Indian even today when the country is standing at the threshold of the twenty-first century. The arranged marriage in India is considered even today as a blessing. In *To Whom She Will* Jhabvala observes that love in childhood of the youngsters does not necessarily lead to marriage. The grand-daughter of Pandit Ram Bahadur Saxena, Amrita, does not succeed in marrying Hari Sahni, her love. The reason behind his failure is that, like a fish, Hari Sahni is hooked by Sushila Anand with the efforts of his parents. There is no alternative left to Hari but, blindly to obey the dictates of his parents and surrender to their sweet-will. He adapts himself to the situation of his marriage and no discord is created between them on this account. As per the choice of her mother and grandfather, Amrita, who loved and liked to have a marriage bond with Hari, is wedded to Krishana Sen Gupta. After the marriage no problem or family discord crops up between them; they live joyfully and like a river flows their married life smoothly, sweetly and successfully. Matrimonial harmony is well maintained between them. V.A. Shahane aptly observes:

"Marriage, then, at best seems a compromise in the social scene, an adjustment that two individuals have to make to conform to a social norm, [12]"

An arranged marriage may not necessarily lead to a cordial and harmonious life. Jhabvala observes that in. most of the cases of arranged marriage, discord is noticeable. Such marriages result in family troubles as they are full of many weaknesses. "There are", remarks Jamens Faibleman, "the

inseparable defects of actuality in this type of conjugation". The discordant and disharmonious relation between Prema and Sun are well presented by Jhabvala in *To Whom She Will*. Illicit relations with other women are the basic cause behind this disharmony. Prema was not happy with her sexual relations with other women. She makes very befitting remarks about her unhappy life, which are full of sense and feeling. She very rightly says, "The heart is like a fruit which can only prosper in the warm sunshine of love..., only those who are unhappy can feel the unhappiness of love"<sup>[13]</sup>. "The novels of Jhabvala are full of problem of disharmony in married life. Guizari Lal and Sarla Devi in *Get Ready for Battle*, are a couple who is married for many years. They live a married life full of dissonance and disturbance. Sarla Devi is a so-called social worker. She has a desire to dedicate her life for the betterment and well-being of the poor. As a result of this obsession, she does not live with her husband who believes in money making morality and leads a materialistic life. Sarla has a virtue in her, she is a stoic and thus takes and treats both pleasure and pain with equal thinking, while, her husband is a money minded man following and worshipping the monster of money making motives and thus he has inherited a commercial outlook of life. Another couple, Vishnu and Mala in *Get Ready for Battle* lives a life of disagreement and tension. Mala is a frank, forward and fashionable woman though she remains tradition bound at heart. Outwardly, at the same time she does not like a modern man has an open outlook of life as he mixes freely and frequently with the unmarried modernized girls and also with a number of hocked women. He gives them a life and takes them for a pleasure drive in his car. At times he quarrels with his wife for her not being as 'mod' as he expected her to be.

Thus, Jhabvala artistically exposes the frivolities and frailties of Indian married life. The clash of ego between a husband and a wife, is a barrier to the pious bond of matrimony, the mixing of the husband with strange and unfamiliar though it may seem odd to the Western people. They look up the Indian marriage system with an eye of delight and strangeness.

The inter-caste marriages in India are generally looked down upon, as the Indian society is blindly castism ridden. Jhabvala depicts in her novels the sense of seclusion, hushed pensiveness pervading the Indian society because of the inter-caste marriages. Few marriages that are solemnized in the novels of Jhabvala have resulted in a failure or in frustration.

The experience of those characters who have married into other castes is very sad and bitter one. Jhabvala in her novel *To Whom She Will* presents and portrays men and women who are bound into the wedlock of inter-caste marriages. Pandit- Ram Bahadur Saxena has three daughters all of them have married out of their own caste. Radha, the mother of the heroine of the novel, and Mira, the aunt of Amrita, are widows. They had children from their inter-caste marriages. Sarla is married to Vazir Dayal Mathur. Both the husband and wife are rich and prosperous but their conjugal life is not happy and harmonious. They get fed up with the tension and boredom of their married life. They want to escape from it. Sarla joins the clubs and committees and becomes a clubbable character. Her husband Vazir Dayal undergoes, the tension and torture of the life of loneliness and to while away this he either plays on a musical instrument or goes on horse-riding and drinks wine. Sarla wants to divert her mind

to "arrange a peasant to show them India's beautiful culture"<sup>[14]</sup>. She arranges, as an active member of the Ladies council, the Garden party where 'People from Embassies would participate'<sup>[15]</sup>. Thus, Sarla represents that class of women who care more for the outside world than for their house-hold affairs and day to day chores.

Another novel of Jhabvala, *The House Holder*, also depicts the picture of discordant married life. In the novel, Prem's marital relation with Indu are not fully free from disharmony and disturbance. Prem feels frustrated and thinks that he is tethered and tied matrimonially and mentally to one who "was not only quite different from what he had wished and hoped for but who also opposed him in his wishes."<sup>[16]</sup> He is so cruel and callous to her that he does not permit her to visit her maternal home. With the result Indu reacts angrily and asks him, "who are you to forbid?" This kind of dissonance between Prem and Indu and also between Vishnu and Mala in *Get Ready for Battle* produces much attachment and best of sex between the husband and the wife. Prem brings sweets for Indu and the scenes of their loving, doving and cooing throughout the day are marred by their real involvement. At the departure of his wife, the man in Prem really feels drawn towards Indu, both physically and emotionally. The same situation is seen in the case of Vishnu and Mala wants to go to Bombay, where her parents live, but Vishnu rejects her request and does not allow her to go to Bombay to meet her parents. But in no way does this lessen their intensity of love. The novelist seeks a new life pattern in all this, the elements of this pattern are not of a complementary but of a contradictory nature. This life pattern is quite to what we find in R.K. Narayan's *English Teacher* where the English teacher takes marriage to be a sacred religious tie and shows all divine love for his dear beloved wife in this world and the other world to come after death. Jhabvala's presentation of this life of marriage and monogamy convinces the European reader only in a marginal way. It is so because of the cultural differences and dimensions. The institution of marriage stands at a cultural clash between East and West. To a European mind there is either marriage or divorce. But this is not so with an Indian mind. Marriage to the Indians is a sacred and spiritual union between the husband and wife and there is no room for divorce between the two. Even death cannot separate them from each other spiritually and divinely. Though India is much advanced today, yet there are not many cases of divorce and a divorced woman does not hold a high and respectable place in society. The wife does try to adapt herself to the surroundings of her husband's home at any cost. She is prepared to face humbly and silently all torture, torment and tension till she is completely broken. This is not so in the western countries where a woman is fully familiar with and conscious of her rights. She has as much a right to live a life of equality, dignity and freedom as a man has. A little line of difference or disagreement between a husband and a wife may result in a legal separation between them. The woman is fully free to marry again and so is the man. Etta's outlook of marriage, for instance, in *A Backward Place*, is the characteristic outlook of the West. Etta, the beauty queen of Hungary, has had three marriages and three divorces. She changed the husband as one changes one's dress, She holds that "Marriages, my dear, are made to be broken, that's one of the rules of modern civilization."<sup>[17]</sup> She finds India an orthodox society with an orthodox morality. Thus, the Eastern outlook of marriage is almost

entirely different from that of the west. That is why the Western reader is attracted towards the novels of Jhabvala, The spine of jarring and jingling tune of marriage bells not only ring in the life of the Indians who have married within or out of their caste but also of those people who make inter-cultural marriages. In her novel *A Backward Place* Judy marries Bal, the Indian who is quite naive, and hopes against hope that one day he will become a very prominent and popular figure of the stage. He becomes the stooge of Krishna Kumar, a famous film actor and indulges in frivolities. He appears before us as a sharp sent rest to his Eastern wife who is parsimonious and wants to behave like Sita. She is always seen speaking to herself, "Had Sita said. I won't go to Rama. Had she, or had she not followed him into exile, into the Jungle, into whatever places and hardships fate might lead them? And all this without hesitation, or following with sweet devotion and of her own free assent, the path of wifely duty" [18]. Sita of the Ramayan is her ideal but it is noticeable that when Prithvi, the only son of Bal and Judy, is ill and wants water with ice, Judy crosses the limits of gentility and graceful goodness and creates a scene and forcefully compels Bal to go out and get it. But Judy is a sensible lady who later on like an ordinary good and gentle Indian wife, realizes that she has been harsh to her husband C. Karnani, in his unpublished article on *A Backward Place* calls this behavioural situation a "marital conflict born out of cross-cultural marriage". But it appears that Karnani has wrongly evaluated this aspect of Judy's life. Perhaps he holds that an Indian wife in the Indian social surroundings has to surrender herself in all matters; she must not raise an eyebrow against her husband and must not stand against the will of her husband even if the husband is neglecting his duty as a father and thus harming her motherly feelings for the child. It is nevertheless true that marital relations may be strained in cross-cultural marriages as Jhabvala has shown in many of her novels but the example of Judy that Karnani has taken to illustrate this conflict does not hold the ground. Judy is more than an Indian wife when she feels that she is guilty of having been rough and rude to her husband. The emotional attachment of Judy to Bal is combined with a complete consciousness of Bal's failing and frivolities which are responsible for forming Judy's view about the life and behaviour of Bal. Undoubtedly, Judy's love for Bal is boundless and in this she by-passes the boundaries of the rational society of the West, That is why Clarissa speaks of Judy, "She's doing very nicely. She has the good sense to live here was to turn herself into a real Indian wife [19]." We cannot and should not form a blemished opinion about Judy on account of this single minor incident. So only one such incident in the life of Judy and Bal cannot be the cause of As a matter of fact, this incident is merely a small weightless pebble in the peaceful pool of their life: it is there to show Bal what his prime duty as a father is and how he must behave as a husband. On the whole, the long span of the years of Judy's living with Bal have been calm, content and satisfactory. However, there is no denying the fact that Etta's marriages have always been lacking in concord and harmony. The disruption and disharmony in her conjugal relationship begins with her marriage. It is her first marriage with an Indian student whom she had met in Vienna. After his having come back from Europe, Etta's husband turns out "to be much attached to his most uncultured family and not that cultured gay youth with whom she had gone dancing in all

the nicest cafes [20]". In a very habitual way and as a routine course, she divorces her husband, marries again and divorces again, and repeats this all over again. When she first came to India, she like any European, feels fascinated to the Indian surroundings and life and think she would get and gain much out of her visit but the sky changes after having lived here for quite sometime. She complains like any disease and that India gave her nothing except germs and diseases and that she lived like a caged parrot in India, not fully and freely mixing with the social system, modes, manners and mores of the Indian life.

The same theme of matrimonial discord is repeated time and again in the novels of Jhabvala posing a particular problem of marriage disharmony. In her next novel *Esmond in India*, she respects this popular theme of disharmony in cross-cultural marriage. There is a tinge of irony and touch of sarcasm in the presentation of this disharmony. She describes the marriage relationship of Gulab, a rich Indian girl, with Esmond. As a novelist of social problems, she probes deep into Esmond's weakness as an European and also Gulab's shortcomings as a traditional Indian. Gulab creates scene at the meal times. The novelist has realistically and artistically depicted the differences in their food habits, tastes, liking and disliking. Esmond like any other European, is upset by the spicy smell of rich food which is liked by Gulab. He is displeased with Gulab's living pattern which is full of uncleanness and untidiness. He abhors Gulab's Indian attitude to life. The novelist observes:

"He (Esmond) becomes crude in conversation and even offensive. His sarcasm, his sneer, his contempt is all lost on Gulab since with her pretty looks she is very languorous and placid. [21]"

Ultimately Gulab leaves Esmond and thus an autumnal curtain is drawn over her dry, dull, disharmonious and discordant relationship with Esmond.

Thus, as a result of the cross-cultural marriages, it can be presumed that the European and Indian cultures are poles apart. In this context we can uphold the dictum that East is East and West is West and that the twin shall never meet. The Europeans are very likely to take an indulgent view of the failing of their own near and dear one's and of the Indians who pretend to be modern but are basically tradition ridden core. Jhabvala has a good European background and vast Indian experience which enables her to seek fresh insights and break new grounds into the Indian marriages. The presentation of the pre-marital relationship between Nimmi and Batliwalla in *The Nature of Passion* and between Shakuntala and Esmond in *Esmond in India*, is quite remarkable, revealing and relevance in the context of the changing social conditions in India, Nimmi drinks and dances with Batliwalla, visits Gulab at night knowing pretty well that her parents would not approve of it. Shakuntala is fascinated and romantically captured by Esmond and, like Nimmi, she falls an easy prey to the temptation of flesh, Both Nimmi and Shakuntala have undergone the taste of pre-marital experiences, a rather common feature in the Western society and unheard of and uncommon in the Indian society. Thus, Jhabvala's remarkable achievements are the sense of irony which marks her portrayal of the situation in a conventional but slowly modernizing society and the dexterity and deftness with which she weaves together the varied and complex threads of social life.

Jhabvala is a past master in presenting the picture of pre-marital relation among the people of the west. In her novel

A New Dominion, Lee's sexual encounter with the Swami in the hut, reminding her of such similar experience with Gopi in a hotel near the mosque, is presented romantically. She says, "He was the only person there, He was terrible, terrifying. He drove right on into me and through me, calling me beastly names, shouting them out loud and at the same time hurting me as much as he could. [22]" This description and such others of pre-marital sexual experience are repeated time and again by Jhabvala to touch the chord of the westerner's sensuous sensibility. In her famous novel *Heat and Dust* the narrator tells about child who was physically weaker than the narrator. "He has constant erections and goes to a tremendous size, so that I am reminded of the Lord Shiva whose huge member is worshipped by Hindu women. [23]" This may give a sense of obscene sensuousness in the name of life-like and realistic presentation from a female novelist's pen.

Besides this, there are the causes of post-marital and extra-marital relationship in the novels of Jhabvala. The portrayal of the bond between Gulzari Lal and Mrs. Kusum Mehra, the widow of an army officer, is a good example to show and sum up the view of Jhabvala and her reaction towards such intimacy. Kusum looks after and cares for the comforts and conveniences of Gulzari Lal, shares his bed and actively participates in solving the problems of his family. But after all she is a woman; she is not satisfied with merely living as a mistress; she wants her relationship to be sanctified and sacred on the altar of marriage as ceremony. A similar relationship is seen in the story "A Bad Woman", a story included in *An Experience of India*. Chameli lives in Bombay as a mistress of Sethji who is thirty years elder to her in age has business in Delhi. When Sethji visits her, how sentimental and serviceable she becomes:

"She talked and talked and did not stop, and she ran backwards and forwards serving him, cooking for him, massaging him, doing everything, she possibly could think of for him.., he fell asleep and then she sat by him and fanned her hand over him to keep the flies away. He took his teeth out when he slept, his mouth was open, snore came out of it and his big jowls quivered. A tear came out of her eye and splashed on to his cheek. [24]"

Chameli knows her limitations and personal problems; she knows it very well that it is not possible for Sethji to take her to Delhi where his family lived and every one knew him as a big man. The society in India in the matters of love, marriage and sex is orthodox and rigid and won't sanction her any other relationship with Sathji. Thus, sex in the Indian society is a taboo.

Jhabvala thus finds in her novels the sensuous and the romantic in different kinds of pre-conjugal, conjugal, post-conjugal and extra-conjugal relationships. Besides these, she also presents the grotesque, bizarre and odd customs of marriage in Indian society for the pleasure and fun of the people of the West. The status or the class in society in place of caste or creed is becoming the criteria of marriage in the present day world in India. For instance, in the novel *To Whom She Will*, the grandfather of Amrita does not allow her to marry the boy whose family position and social status are much lower than those of her family. In the matters of match-making and matrimonial bargain, the word of the parents is final. In India marriages are destined in heaven but the marriage- matches are made through a broker, though in the case of Nimmi, it is advertised in the matrimonial columns of the newspapers.

Earlier, when they were still children and did not know anything of what they wanted, their parents took them and tied them up as wife and husband, Child marriages in the novels of Jhabvala are depicted realistically and ironically. They pose a social problem of population in the context of the present situation. In the novel *To Whom She Will*, the mother of Harish becomes a mother only when she was a girl of sweet sixteen. The sweeper's daughter was married when she was only twelve years old. But this is not so these days. Nowadays, the child marriage is legally an offence and it is prohibited by law. Yet, it is a paradox, nevertheless true that all the laws are helpless when it comes to actual practice in the society. Even to this day the boys and girls of very young age are married in the villages of Rajasthan and many other states of India.

Jhabvala is a keen observer of things. She paints the things in their minute details. She is an active participator in the joys and sorrows of the characters. She does not remain merely an outsider. When on her visits to India she lived with her to go deep into the heart of them. As a European author her descriptions are full of minute details. Jhabvala, however, cannot compete and compare with Bhabani Bhattacharya who has also an eye on the foreign readers and describes the marriage customs of India to their deepest details. Bhabani Bhattacharya begins with the advertisement for marriage. In his great novel, *Music for Mohini*, that may very well rank Pearl's Buck's *The Good Earth*, he describes what happens before and after the marriage; how a girl is seen; how the broker works for bringing the two families together; how the house of the bride is decorated; how the people are feasted, how the marriage ceremony takes place, how the bride is taken home, how she is received by the groom's family and how she is taken to the flower-bed. Thus, every detailed description of every aspect of the marriage ceremony in a Bengali family is given by Bhabani Bhattacharya. Jhabvala, like Bhabani Bhattacharya, talks of the brokers of marriages. She does not mention the caste that traditionally played the role of a broker, nor does she talk about other professionals associated with the wedding. Bhabani Bhattacharya clearly tells us that the broker's part is played by a bangle-seller who moves from door to door and has an opportunity to see the girls. In *Music for Mohini*, he says that:

"The bangle-seller is asked by the sister of the master of Bahula to keep his eyes open for a likely Brahmin maid. So the bangle-seller was on the look out and here was Mother Lakshmi with all the lakshanas, the eight luck signs and symbols."

Jhabvala does not go into such details, she simply says that the marriage broken, brought a fine offer for Hari.

The further step in the settlement of the matrimonial bargain is that the bride's parents go to the house of the bridegroom. Jhabvala knows this well. She tells us that in the house of Elan, Mr. and Mrs. Anand went to settle the marriage of Sushila, their daughter with Hari. Later on the girl is seen by the bridegroom and his parents. The old woman of the house says that it is sinful to expose the girl to the eyes of the man she is to marry. However, the bride and the bridegroom meet each other before marriage and after the approval of the girl by the boy and the members of his family, the boy is booked for marriage. The novelist tells us that Hari was booked on the payment of Rs. 21 only. In this case Jhabvala's observation does not seem to be authentic. It may be possible that she belittles the amount in order to make a

fund of the whole ceremony or perhaps the figure of the amount is auspicious. The description of the practice of seeing the girl for marriage as presented by Bhabani Bhattacharya is perhaps much more authentic and artistic. He knows fully well what really happens at such occasions but Jhabvala seems to base her material on a piece of casual information and thus does not go in for an authentic detail. The betrothal ceremony in *To Whom She Will* is not described in details. Jhabvala simply refers to this practice by making Anand's grandmother talk about it. She talks about the things that must have been done: a betrothal ceremony, sending of the letter and coming of the bridegroom's people to the bride's house. She is not happy with all this and feels that the proper rites and rituals should not be neglected. "God would be unhappy", the old lady warns. By showing that many rites and rituals were neglected, Jhabvala shows a society struggling against tradition and advancing towards modernity and progressiveness [25].

In Today's set up of society, dowry is a bane. The dangerous devil of dowry has devoured many dear daughters of their parents. It is fully and freely demanded and unwillingly given by the parents of the bride. It is kind of high premium paid for an insured life for a bride in the groom's house. The higher the groom in status and rank, the higher is the premium of the dowry. In the present society many people pose and pretend that they will not accept any dowry, as the old woman in the novel says, "we will wait for a beautiful, fair, hardworking girl from good to demand dowry and yet they demand it" [26].

There is a class of people who themselves are ready to give a big dowry for their daughter's marriages. In her novel *The Nature of Passion*, Lalaji will give the dowry and no one in Delhi will believe the figure. Vidhi also thinks that a wife must bring a dowry. The rich people pride themselves on giving big dowries. Even the first ceremony of such marriages will cost more than ten thousand rupees. Thus dowry is deeply rooted as social evil in the social set up of the Indian society.

Thus, Jhabvala deals with the Indian system of marriage and its evils in all comprehensiveness and details. This comprehensiveness makes a European dream of India, her culture and her people their social, religious, economic and political life. The most important social institution is that of marriage and morals.

And Jhabvala narrates her experience of marriage and morals of the common folk, of the rich, of the neo-rich, of the middle class and the classless millions.

The marriage is described in detail. When everything including the dowry is settled between the parties, the bridegroom goes to the bride's house which has been decorated for the auspicious occasion. The novelist describes the scene at Sushila's house;

"The big red and white striped wedding harquee. The bands struck up, a gramophone played, coloured lights revolved and flashed. [27]"

The bridegroom put on a long golden coat, the white silken leggings, the Kummerbund, the crowned turban, red and slippers with pointed toes. The groom rode a beautiful white mare having bad experience of such service. The novelist describes:

"A little nephew in an orange satin suit sat behind the bridegroom. Strings of flowers hung from his turban over his face. Just a little before he climbed the horse, the

bridegroom's parents presented clothes to female relatives. [28]"

The marriage procession is arranged. There is a band, there are cars belonging to the relatives and there are hired cars also. Tongas are also there. Cars and tongas are tastefully decorated, There are "tall lights in wooden frames on the heads of the man with naked legs and ragged shirts. [29]" The marriage procession comes to the house of the bride. Some ceremonies are performed. The bride is brought to the bridegroom. She is dressed in a red Salwar and Kamiz with gold and silver ribbons stitched on and her face is veiled by her dupatta. "She hangs a garland round her neck. [30]" To this ceremony also is attached a superstition. The bridegroom faces, the east and the bride faces the west. They regard it to be suspicious for the couple.

Thereafter, other ceremonies follow: photographs are taken, introductions are made, uncles meet uncles and cousins meet cousins. A big and sumptuous Feast is arranged. Jhabvala makes fun of a marriage feast when she says that "Three hundred sears of Ghee was used for Laddoes alone, more than five hundred guests were eating and drinking for four days" [31]. The bridegroom sits canopy in front of the sacred fire meant for the seven rounds by the bride and the bridegroom. The bride sits next to the bridegroom. The pandit sits opposite and drones ceaseless prayers and chants mantras. The marriage is performed at an auspicious hour.

After this ceremony is over, the bridegroom is taken inside the house. There are fun and frolics; there are songs, clapping of hands and jokes out and cast on the bridegroom from all corners. He is teased by the women folk of family. Then a competition between the bride and the bridegroom is held. They throw a rupee coin into a bowl of water and the bridegroom and the bride have to compete in getting it out. The slippers of the bridegroom are pilfered and then hidden and money is demanded for their return.

Here it is to be observed that Jhabvala presents and paints these scenes and situations with a genuine and aesthetic sense of the comic and a spirit of gaiety, from the booking of the boy on the payment of rupees twenty one to the pandit's tying the end of Haris Kummerbund to Sushila's dupatta, everything sounds jolly and jovial but comic. The marriage scenes and customs portrayed give the western reader vivid and vital pictures of very modern Indian domestic life in Delhi, a city old in tradition but young and modern in experience. The grotesqueness and the oddities of those rites and rituals delight a non-Indian reader to make the novels of Jhabvala sell like hot-cakes in the Western world.

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