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EAST-WEST ENCOUNTER IN THE SELECT WORKS OF RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA

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ABSTRACT—

East-West encounter in Jhabvala is a prominent theme running through several of her novels and short stories. India is a land of romance and mystery in the eyes of many westerners. The novels of Jhabvala like Esmond in India, Heat and Dust, Three continents, out of India and A strenge climate Jhavala, presents the 'motif' or 'situation' that contrast certain vital elements of India's culture



with that of the west. Though Jhabvala's reputation suffered a severe blow temporarily, she become even more popular in the west. This paper brings out the cultural change that she experienced in her life.

KEYWORDS : *encounter,culture,civilization,transmigration,karma,heritage,Hinduism.*

INTRODUCTION :

Hinduism is a very anceant religion in which many primitive aspects survive beside highly developed philosophical systems.It remains a driving force for the westerners who take intrest in the religion. As Hinduism is the fath of a single cultural unit, to be found in the anceant land India, It is sharply distinguished from the religions of the west by its belief in transformation,...the great religions of the world may brodly be divided into two main groups by this criterion, and Hinduism is the oldest and most enduring of the estren group which maintains that the soul inhabits many bodies in its journey through the cosmos until it reaches its final goal, which is described in varying terms.

The doctrine of Hinduism began to exercise influence on the west especially, after the British conquest and subsequently made a great appeal across the west. Even great scholars like votaire and Emarsan were fascinated by the terms "transmigration", "samsara sagar", "Athma", "Karma", and the like.

Against such a background, Jhabvala explores the possibilities of long lasting and successful co-existence of the East and West in her novels and short stories. She has written about Europeans in India, and sometimes about both. Jhabvala highlights the confrontations conflcites ,nigotiations, compromises, admiration and aversion between one another and leaves the readers to make their own conclusion as to whether the compromise can be achieved.

Further, Jhabvala's novels project a strong view that the Indias, during such moments of cultural encounters, try to prevel over the Europeans and the Europeans either meekly submit themselves to the

Indians or try to distance themselves and escape or retreat to the west. The East-West conflict, in general, stems from cultural, religious and social differences between India and Europe, and so Jhabvala's frictional world depicts these three kinds of encounters cultural, social and spiritual.

Jhabvala will be counted as a modern writer of contemporary India; contemporary not in the sense of time but in the context of ideas. She has been writing for the past twenty-five years about Indians. But the problems that she has taken the ones of modern India. It stands almost impossible but we can find an explanation in the fact that social change is a very gradual process. The seeds of change are planted easily but it takes a considerable time for them to reach maturity. Each step towards maturity brings its share of trials and tribulations.

Jhabvala has written novels and four volumes of short stories. She was awarded the Booker prize for her book "Heat and dust" in 1975. Her novel, "The Householder" has been filmed and she collaborated with the director James Ivory in writing the script of the celebrated film "Shakespeare Wallah." They have also worked together on the film scripts of "The Guru."

It is really surprising how Jhabvala, who has devoted her self totally to the Indian scene, has received so little recognition from the press and the public in India. She has chosen for her subject-matter, the most vitally modern aspect of contemporary Indian life –the East-West encounter.

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