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Impact of Western Imperialism in Post-Colonial India : Replica in Ruth Praver Jhabvala's Novels

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Abstract:

Western imperial influence can be seen in modern India with its different forms of vibrant colours in dresses, style and administration. Though India has witnessed many upheavals during the pre-independence, some circumstances never change with the passing of time. Indians may have developed but their inclination for western system of conduct in offices and its approaches never get changed as it is deeply rooted in the veins of Indian administrative system. Ruth Praver Jhabvala went through with many such experiences in India as she married to an Indian and it can be noticed through the characters of her novels. She has given mirror image of developing India in post-independence time as people have same taste and likings for western culture. Indians have been focused with certain examples from her novels.

Keywords: Colonial, imperialism, western culture, post-colonial era, colonised

British ruled in India for a long time and greatly impacted so called 3000 years old Indian cultural heritage. They tried to impose their thinking in natives as per the need of British administration and culture as they opposed many cultural traditions like 'Sati' and similar systems in India. The real battle took place when freedom struggle of India started by Indian to save their culture. Denying the new system, they stick to their culture and heritage. But some of them accepted as they betrayed to their own people and they became a part of British ruling system and got appointed on many administrative posts. Moreover, British gave them education as per their planning for upcoming generations and made them servants in their offices. They wanted to make India as their business hub for East India Company. Everything was planned well but Indian cultural differences seemed a big hurdle in the path of their successes. India's great ancestry for its glory and image was greatly damaged due to the entry of Western culture.

'Imperial domination' is a postcolonial concept that is come in notice when British colonies of different areas of world were washed out. The concept denotes that colonisers dominated not only on land but also the psychology of colonised. Pramod K. Nayar defines the term very clearly as he states, "'Imperialism' is a term that is often used in conjunction with or, less accurately, as a synonym for 'colonialism'. Imperialism is also the rule by a European nation of a non-European one" (08). The life style of British and their ways of communication were greatly impressed the colonized as it took them away from their native culture and traditions. It greatly impacted their mindset that was increased with a progress of time and they seemed habitual of colonisers' traditions. As a result, some of them never hesitated to argue with their own people over the trivial matter of colonisers as well as took their side.

Franz Fanon brings out the facts about psychology and acceptance of native towards the foreign cultures. He considers them as culprits for their downfall. In his study of colonised people, he finds that the minds of colonised were severely damaged, influenced and savaged. He puts blame on natives and considers them totally responsible for their state of moral and artistic

deterioration. The only thing that 'white man' considered about colonised people that they were not civilized like Europeans. Pramod K. Nayar states clearly regarding the colonised: Fanon argued that colonialism dehumanized the native. This process was so through that the black man can see himself only as the black (mirror) image of the white man. The white man is the master, and represents an object that is to be feared and desired. The black therefore tries to be more like the (desirable) white man/master. He puts on 'white masks'. (23)

Natives were responsible to spread the very idea among others, moreover, white men controlled natives from all around.

Contemporary and diasporic writers like Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh and Bharati Mukherjee have recreated their worlds through practical experience and creative imaginations in the post-colonial era. Ruth Praver Jhabvala is one of the versatile writers who has produced a handful of novels and other literary works reflecting most of the concepts pertaining to postcolonial literature and imperial domination. She is one from England so that she is aware about British and their colonial upbringings. It can be noticed that her works have the different aspects of colonial India. She has depicted the different ways of working of British during colonial era. The novelist herself is also western education, culture and lifestyle. Anna Rutherford of the University of Aarhus has observed about a worshiper and propagator of British culture as she states, "Her first novels are peopled completely by Indians and are written from an Indian point of view. This euphoria lasted for a decade, then the poverty, hunger and the appalling conditions of which she had at first been oblivious suddenly became visible" (28). From the beginning of the novel, *Get Ready for Battle*, the impact of westernization on some Indians characters is seen in Gulzari Lal. Following the western culture, Gulzari Lal keeps Kusum in his house as they are in live-in-relationship.

Being influenced with British style, some of the natives also behave like them as they come in contact to the British officers. Moreover, the rich Indians are prone to the western culture and imperial domination. Some Indians who can afford to pursue higher education in British universities, they have developed western mentality and life style. Their perception about the things around them gets changed as they criticize the various attributes of their own country. They wear dresses like British and encourage others to behave in same manner. They use an adopted language and mix it with their vernacular tongue. Though it changes the originality of the adopted language, it gives them a kind of satisfaction. They feel modern and different from other of their same community. They feel superior and make their groups, sometimes, organize gatherings which generally have a westernised scenario. Published in 1957, *Esmond in India* depicts developing India in early post-independence era in which people enjoy the mixed experiences of western modernity and various attributes of Indian people. Har Dayal and Ram Nath got education from Cambridge University during colonial era. He used to wear Indian dresses in abroad and he talked in 'a terrible babu English' (EI 23) and feels, "Oh yes, certainly it changes us" (EI 23). They started imitating the dress code, tone and life style of England. His manners and style became showy like any western man. He did not like to wear 'kurta-pyjama or a dhoti' (EI 23). Jhabvala has taken lot of efforts to write *Esmond in India* since it is her try to bring together the cultural aspects which are complicated in terms. She has tried her best to maintain the original mindset of British people and their dominating nature through the characters like Esmond, Har Dayal, Amrit, Raj, Shakuntala and Madhuri.

Yasmine Gooneratne focuses in her study of the novel pertaining to Jhabvala's treatment of

Indians. She views, "Although he associates with other westerners in Delhi, Esmond is isolated even among them: he is alone in having no plans to leave India, and thus set apart from his English mistress, Betty and the members of the Western Women's Organization" (91).

Like *Esmond in India*, *Heat and Dust* can also be evaluated in the context of having many instances and characters reeling under various attributes of imperial mindset and domination. The novel is set in both pre-independence and post-independence era. The novel focuses on how the British have the conception that they are far better than the Indians. The British always try to abhor and abominate the natives and always searches for chances to inflict and insult. British are being presented in the novel as self-disciplined and polished contrasting with Indians who are poor and dirty. In an interview with Mr Ramlal G. Agarwal, Jhabvala also expresses her deep feelings for the poor as she states, "I've always moved up and down the social scale quite freely. I think – though only, as I say, among the urban, upper middle and lower middle classes. I haven't lived among the poor, and so obviously I can't write about them directly, although I like to think that they are there indirectly" (1974:36).

In *Heat and Dust*, Mr. Douglas River, the Assistant Collector of Satipur, executes his power in a very arrogant and dominating manner. Being a British authority, he holds pure imperial mindset which is reflected in his behaviour towards colonised. His imperial attitude can be assessed from the following words:

Douglas' voice, firm and manly, rose above the rest. When he spoke, the others confined themselves to murmurs of agreement. He must have made some jokes because every now and again they all laughed in polite unison. Sometimes he seemed to speak rather more sternly, and then the murmurs became very low and submissive till he made another joke whereupon they dissolved in relieved laughter. It was almost as if Douglas were playing a musical instrument of which he had entirely mastered the stops. (HD 37)

Apart from Mr. Douglas River, other British characters like Major Minnies, Dr. Saunders, Mrs. Saunders, Mr. Crawford, collector of the town and Mrs. Crawford hold imperial mindset to the core of their heart.

To conclude, numerous literary theories and texts proliferated along with modulations, movements and trends with having an inherent proximity of the colonial rule and its impact consequent upon the colonial era. The term, 'Imperial domination' deals with a fact just like a remote control in the hands of the colonisers to entice and entrap the colonized by making them accept and establish their attractive dresses, language and western traditions. As a result, the colonised starts imbibing the themes and makes it a habit by forgetting their own culture and traditions. It is all about the colonised's psychological status how the colonisers succeed in colonising the colonised not only physically but also psychologically.

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