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Time of Crisis Like Coronavirus Pandemic”*

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In Collaboration with

S.R.T.M. University, Nanded

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*An International Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal***Two-Day International Web Conference**

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&

Shivaji Mahavidyalaya, Udgir, Dist: Latur (M.S.)**Contents**

Sr. No	NAME OF THE TOPIC	AUTHOR
1.	READING MAYA ANGELOU DURING LOCK DOWN AS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION TO KEEP HUMANITY PROGRESSING	PROF. (DR.) NEELAM TIKKHA
2.	'ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN' IN PANDEMIC TIMES: AN ECOCRITICAL STUDY OF THREE POEMS OF SEAMUS HEANEY	AKSHAT SHUKLA & DR. G D DUBEY
3.	ALBERT CAMUS' 'PLAGUE': INVESTIGATING PANDEMIC ANXIETY THROUGH LITERATURE	DR. RUCHI TOMAR
4.	EPIDEMIC AND WORSHIP REFLECTED IN RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S 'PURATAN BHRITYA' TRANSLATED AS 'KESHTA- MY OLD MANSERVANT'	DR. SHITALBABU AMBADAS TAYADE
5.	LITERATURE, A STRESS BUSTER: THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGY AND LITERATURE	DR. DEEPA VANJANI
6.	HOW LITERATURE HELPS TO RESILIENCE THE HUMAN MINDS DURING THE EPIDEMIC TIME?	A. R. TIRGAR
7.	TAGORE'S SPIRITUALITY IN TURBULENT TIMES	SUBHENDRA KUMAR & DR. SUMAN SINGH
8.	CRISIS MANAGEMENT THROUGH LITERATURE: – WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC	TADAVI RAMESH M
9.	READING PANDEMIC LITERATURE: A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO INDIA	PRABHRATI SEN
10.	THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF LITERATURE IN THE TOUGH TIME OF PREDICAMENTS	CHINTAN BHATT & DR. VIDYA RAO

Special Issue**1****June 2020**Website: www.langlit.org

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Indexed: ICI, Google Scholar, Research Gate, Academia.edu, IBI, IIFC, DRJI, The CiteFactor, COSMOS



11.	MILITARY AND MORALITY METAPHORS IN #CORONA POETRY	MS. VAIMANI S. SHAH
12.	OF HOPE, POSITIVITY AND FORBEARANCE	DR. ULKA S. WADEKAR
13.	CONSIDERING THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN EXISTENTIAL CRISES CREATED BY PANDEMIC	SMT. SONIA UTTAM BAIRAGI
14.	APOCALYPTIC FICTION HELPS US DEAL WITH THE ANXIETY OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC	R. ABIRAMI
15.	LESSONS FROM CHARLOTTE BRONTE'S JANE EYREFOR COVID-19 CRISIS	DR ARCHANA HOODA & MS VEENA SINDHU
16.	ROLE OF LITERATURE AND ITS IMPACT ON HUMAN MIND AT THE TIME OF CRISIS: CRITICAL ANALYSIS	DR.KUNTAL D.BOMPILWAR
17.	LITERATURE AND RAISING AWARENESS IN THE TIME OF CRISIS: ENGAGING PEOPLE WITH COVID-19 PANDEMIC	MD. SHAHIDUL ISLAM
18.	LOCKDOWN, HOME QUARANTINE PHASE AND LITERATURE: HEMINGWAY'S SANTIAGO, A SYMBOL OF SPIRITUAL STRENGTH	DR. J. S. CHEREKAR
19.	VALUE EDUCATION THROUGH LITERATURE: SOLUTION FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF HUMANITY AFTER COVID19	SWAPNALI PRASHANT SHARANARTHI
20.	LEARNING TO LIVE WITH COVID –19 PANDEMIC - THROUGH LITEARATURE AND ONLINE PLATFORM	PADMA RAGAM S.
21.	PANDEMIC LITERATURE AND ITS THERAPEUTIC PURPOSE:AN INTERPRETIVE INQUIRY INTO THE COGNITIVE AND AFFECTIVE COMPONENTS IN DANIEL DEFOE'S A JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR	BHASKAR KUMAR DAS
22.	UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN PANDEMIC THROUGH THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH BY EDGAR ALLAN POE	NAYNA B. JADAV
23.	1984: BLEAKNESS OF ORWELL'S DYSTOPIA	DR. ASHISH GUPTA
24.	THE RED DEATH AND US: A RECONSIDERATION OF EDGAR ALLAN POE'S <i>THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH</i>	THITTEEKSHA PATHANIA
25.	RELEVANCE OF ALBERT CAMUS' 'THE PLAGUE' IN THE TIME OF CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC	YOGESHKUMAR CHIMANBHAI PARMAR



26.	LOCKDOWN, HOME QUARANTINE PHASE AND LITERATURE	MR. BASUDEV PAUL
27.	READING PANDEMIC LITERATURE IN THE CRISIS OF THE CORONA	VIRUSMOHAMMAD NASIRUDDIN BASHIRUDDIN
28.	READING W.B. YEATS'S THE SECOND COMING IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC WORLD	PROF. RASHMI VARMA
29.	THE SCARS OF QUARANTINE: A STUDY OF PANDEMIC CRISIS OF PAST AND PRESENT ON THE MIRROR OF STEVEN SODERBERGH'S 'CONTAGION'	SOVAN SEN
30.	STARTING WITH THE SCRATCH OF COVID: A TRIAL TO UNLEARN THE LEARNT	DR PARUL MISHRA
31.	PROBLEMS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH LITERATURE AMONG THE STUDENTS IN RURAL AREA DURING COVID-19	DR. SUDAM LAXMAN KUMAR
32.	"ROLE OF LITERATURE IN 21st CENTURY OF POST COVID-19 WORLD, THAT LIES BEYOND DARK SHADES"-A STUDY	Ms. INDRANI MERUGU, Dr. P.R.V.N.KESAVA KUMAR & MS. A RADHIKA
33.	OBTAINING WISDOM FROM CAMUS' THE PLAGUE IN THE TIME OF A PANDEMIC	SUMANTA RAJBANSHI
34.	MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING IN CORONA CRISIS	DR. JAY MEHTA
35.	LOOKING BEYOND PANDEMICS: A RAY OF HOPE WITH LITERATURE	REEMA SHARMA
36.	NARRATIVE ETHICS IN THE PANDEMIC TIMES: AN EXPLORATION OF COLIN DIYEN AYEAH'S THE EARTH IN PERIL	EUNICE FONYUY FONDZE-FOMBELE
37.	THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN THE TIME OF CRISIS LIKE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC	MORE J.G.
38.	EMPATHY TOWARDS THE VICTIMS OF HOLOCAUST AS REFLECTED IN THE NOVELS OF RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA	DR. DILIP KUMAR JENA & LAKHAN R. GAIDHANE
39.	PRESENT IN COMA; FUTURE FOGGY	DR.SUNIL PAWAR
40.	THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN THE TIME OF CRISIS LIKE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC LITERATURE: A SHELTER FOR SANITY	MRS. MAHESWARI P.



41.	ROLE OF LITERATURE IN COVID 19 SCENARIOS IN CHANGING LIFE STYLE	DR.SHETKAR HIRKAN CHANNAPPA
42.	IMPACT OF HOLOCAUST: BELIEF AND DISBELIEF IN GOD: ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER'S ENEMIES, A LOVE STORY	BERCY G
43.	READING THE EARTH ABIDES AS A POST-PANDEMIC FICTION	EKTA LADDHA & PROF. PULIN BHATT
44.	IMPORTANCE OF LITERATURE DURING CORONA VIRUS CRISIS	RAMPAL KUMRE
45.	FROM PESTILENCE TO RESILIENCE: A JOURNEY THROUGH SELECTED POEMS	DR. DEEPALI RAJSHEKHAR PATIL
46.	REVISITING AND RETHINKING LITERATURE ABOUT MASS DISEASE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC	DR. KRUPA NAMAN SHAH
47.	DEPICTION OF EPIDEMICS IN LITERATURE AND HUMAN EXISTENCE	DR. VIVEK ISHVARBHAI PARMAR
48.	DYSTOPIAN FICTION DURING THE PANDEMIC	CHANDRA N
49.	LEARNING FROM THE ECHOES OF PAST PLAGUES WITH THE HELP OF LITERATURE	B.FARHAN
50.	LITERATURE A TRUE AND EVERGREEN COMPANION FOREVER FOR HUMANS	DR. PADMAVATI S. UNDALE
51.	PANDEMONIUM IN THE ANIMAL KINGDOM: A SAFARI TO SLAUGHTERHOUSES THROUGH OLGA TOKARCZUK'S DRIVE YOUR PLOW OVER THE BONES OF THE DEAD	KANMANI C.S. ARUMUGAM & DR. MARIE JOSEPHINE ARUNA
52.	SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALING IN THE TIMES OF EPIDEMICS THROUGH THE LENS OF LITERATURE	MITAL MACWAN
53.	FORETELLING HORROR: TOWARDS THE PANDEMIC IN THE SPECULATIVE FICTION OF CARMEN MARIA MACHADO	STUTI MAMEN
54.	CONTEMPLATION VS CONFRONTATION: AN ANALOGY OF JAYANTA MAHAPATRA'S THE ABANDONED BRITISH CEMETERY AT BALASORE, INDIA AND T. MARX'S WE WERE BORN DURING TERRIBLE TIMES...	P.SIYAMALA & DR.MARIE JOSEPHINE ARUNA



55.	QUEST TO UNRAVEL THE UNKNOWN AMIDST THE PANDEMIC-A STUDY	HEMAMALINI DHAMODARAN
56.	KESHTA, OLD MANSERVANT OF MINE-A LESSON IN HUMANITY	DIMPLE D. MAPARI
57.	THE SECRET GARDEN BY FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT:THE TALE OF A JOURNEYFROM EPIDEMIC TO LIFE	DR. RAMAKANT DNYANOBARAO MUNDHE
58.	ECONSTRUCTING LITERATURE IN THEPRESENT SITUATION OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC	DR. NANDA SATHE
59.	PANDEMIC LITERATURE AND MULTIPLE WAYS OF RELATING TO THE WORLD AROUND WITH REFERENCE TO ALBERT CAMUS' THE PLAGUE	DEBABRATA SARDAR
60.	POCALYPTIC ANXIETY, SUSTAINABLE ANTHROPOCENTRISM AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE POST HUMAN NETFLIX FILMS I AM MOTHERAND TAU	VISHNU S P
61.	THE ROLE OF BHAGAVAD GITA IN THE TIME OF CRISIS LIKE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC	DR. JAYESH MANDANKA
62.	COVID 19! RESULT OF EXPLOITING MOTHER NATURE:WHOSE WRATH IS IT?	DR. ALKA DUTT
63.	WHAT LITERATURE CAN TEACH US ABOUT EPIDEMICS	DR. MALA SRIVASTAVA
64.	ROLE OF POETRY DURING LOCKDOWN DUE TO CORONAVIRUS	DR. ALKA RANI AGRAWAL
65.	PANDEMICS AND LITERATURE: AIDES-MÉMOIRES FROM THE PAST PANDEMICS: POPULAR LEITMOTIF IN LITERATURE	DR. POOJA KUNDU
66.	LITERATURE AS A BREATHE TO SUFFOCATION DURING PANDEMIC PERIOD	DR. AHILYA BHARATRAO BARURE
67.	LITERATURE AND PANDEMIC: A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY	THORE DHANAJI VITHALRAO
68.	A PANDEMIC READING OF JACK LONDON'S THE SCARLET PLAGUE	DR. ARVIND NAWALE



38.

EMPATHY TOWARDS THE VICTIMS OF HOLOCAUST AS REFLECTED IN THE NOVELS OF RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA**DR DILIP KUMAR JENA**Assistant Professor in English
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Dist- Gondia Maharashtra**ABSTRACT:**

Humanity, since the very inception of its existence, has been experiencing many revulsive impacts begot out of crises, either man-made or natural. The viciousness of man-made crises like the Holocaust is more despising and horrifying which casts our memories off and on. The horrors of the Holocaust do not require artistic accumulation. Ruth Praver Jhabvala reconstructs the unreliable memories pertaining to the Holocaust with the help of strong, style and characterization in her novels. Though it is not the central theme of her works, she has imparted sentiment to the readers by operating their imagination. She assembles the victims of Holocaust as the characters of some of her novels: A Backward Place and The Householder. Obviously, the narratives make the readings visualize the awfulness of the event and empathize with the victims.

Keywords: Empathy, Holocaust, Psychological, Spiritual, Dehumanization And Genocides.

Literature enlivens an event by conferring vitality and propelling it to the status of perpetuity. It is extraordinarily different from history by not merely recording and informing the readers but by inciting them to imagine and visualize, to universalize and empathize, to feel and comprehend with all subtleties and assumptions. Litterateurs, the architects of literature, cast a perfect emotional pitch with the help of their power of creativity and narratology. Keeping the cosmic approach, they encompass candidly the cries of crises, the cues of commotions, the celestas of celebrations and life in its entirety from chaos to catharsis. Holocaust is considered to be the most destructive man-made crisis that the humanity has ever seen. The history records all the stories and statistics in a documented manner but fails to make us feel, "Holocaust is one of the most thoroughly documented events in history, and still entirely resists comprehension."¹ Ruth Praver Jhabvala grabs the opportunity to hit some pages of her novels with the humanity memories of the Holocaust none other than her is a befitting person to articulate whose as many as forty family members would have been killed in the incident of ethnic genocide.

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Jhabvala was a daughter of Polish-Jewish refugees of Germany in Nazi era and came to England escaping from Holocaust in 1939. Her father left Germany and settled in Britain when she was twelve years old. During this period, Nazi rule showered its terror on Germans. Her family was attached to a group which was in conflict with Nazism. Her father killed himself when he “learned that more than forty relatives had been murdered in the camps”² during the Holocaust. Her childhood was imprinted with trauma and agony because of Nazis’ oppression. She prefers Germans and British as characters in her novels. She proclaims in a famous interview with Ramlal G. Agarwal, “I would like to live much more the West, going back to India sometimes but not as much as before”³ (1974:36). Ronald Shepherd makes a statement about Jhabvala and all other Jews’ community people as he says, “Perhaps more simply we need to remember Amos Oz’s observation that where there is one Jew there are usually at least several different points of view”⁴ (83). The disturbances which she witnessed in her childhood had an immense impact on her later life as well as on her writing career.

Jhabvala has introduced German characters from her birth place and she tries to bring forth the unending physical and psychological sufferings during the Holocaust. Hans Loewe in *The Householder* is a German character who introduces himself Prem as, “Seven thousand miles away from your India, in Frankfurt Germany” (HH 31). He comes to India and wants to be acquainted with its culture, religion, meditation techniques and to gain knowledge of spirituality. While projecting Hans, a German expatriate, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala tries to revive the incidents related with the Holocaust where some of her family members were killed and her father committed suicide. Hans is a character who is being projected in continuous mental trauma and inner conflict.

Hans Loewe comes to India in search of spirituality. He has been groomed in such an atmosphere that sans humanity and compassion. He gets muddled with the monotonous and heaviness of office work and materialistic civilization. He says, “Our materialistic civilization has collected so much waste matter inside us that the spirit has become dirty with mud” (HH 114). He emphasizes on spirituality and peace of life because “A westerner’s nature is so that he feels he must conquer the world. Can I change my nature so that I can conquer myself? This is what I strive for” (HH 89). From the very beginning, he keeps himself busy in search of spiritual bliss. He elucidates his feelings, “My thoughts are wild and bad, I cannot control them . . . I try to gather them in one point . . . but - pfutch! They scatter wild like this” (HH 88). He has been trying to concentrate over the situation, but his previous experiences drag him away from spiritual thoughts.

Hans’ search for spiritual bliss makes him wander from Delhi to South India as he says, “Yes, now I am taking again the rucksack on the back. . . . There I hope perhaps to meet with guru who will guide me” (HH 135). He came to India to find out such a holy person or sadhu who would explain him well the spirituality. Before coming to Delhi, he wandered in different parts of country to find out such a fellow but in vain. He explains it well when he is talking with Prem, a protagonist, “The sadhus are right one must sit on nails and mortify the flesh . . . It must be mortified so the thoughts will be controlled” (HH 88). Jhabvala’s instincts as basically a German are projected through the character of Hans. Though she is a wife of an Indian architect, her heart always beats for her homelands. She admits, “When one



writes about India as a European and in English (as I do), inevitably one writes not for Indian but Western readers”⁴ (*New York Times* 22 Apr. 1975).

Jhabvala has not always presented German characters as psychologically disturbed ones. Sometimes, some of them are shown as normal ones by providing them a touch of native belongingness. They have been handled with her parental approach as if she has taken them from her family. Dr. Franz Hochstadt and Mrs. Frieda Hochstadt, his wife, a German couple who “settled in England for many, many years” (*BP* 25) seems to have a familiar touch with the writer in the novel, *A Backward Place*. Dr. Hochstadt comes to India with two years contract at University as a visiting professor. The couple is presented in such a manner that it can be assumed Jhabvala recollects her parents’ wandering from Germany to England and their humble, simple and gregarious life. Robert Cohen aptly remarks, “Acknowledge the old country a nation buried deep in language, religion, custom on their loyalty and emotions”⁶ (36).

Another character, Judy, from the same novel, has similar attributes. Judy’s mother killed herself by hanging to a hook in the ceiling of a lavatory after Jhabvala’s father committed suicide in a suspicious manner. The incident of the Holocaust thrust the Jews into such a fearful state of mind and created an indelible impact in their psyche. Jhabvala’s family members left Germany and migrated to England but could not forget the horrible experience of the incident. As a result, they started living with all awe and fear though they were far away from Germany. They made it a habit with themselves to prefer to live inside their houses and imposed the same on their next generations. Hence, Jhabvala had the same upbringing and conditioning that continued to haunt till her death. It is clearly reflected in the character of Judy recollects her childhood:

Her father had made precision instruments in a factory; her mother cooked and cleaned and kept Judy away from strangers. Her mother didn’t trust strangers; these included the neighbours. You were safest if you kept yourself to yourself. So they did, just the three of them, in that tight little house, with the doors and curtains firmly shut to keep the cold and the strangers out. (*BP* 31)

She never intends to go back to England because of her childhood’s bitter experiences. Her father died due to “‘lung cancer’ (‘he’d never smoked in his life,’ Judy said, bitterly, as if she thought it unfair.)” (*BP* 32). Her mother died too with an unknown reason as she “had killed herself; hanged herself in the lavatory” (*BP* 32).

The brutal events of dehumanization and genocides related to the Holocaust have been recorded here and there in diaries and histories. But, the far-reaching psychological effects on the shaky beholders as well as the escapees are beyond the counts of history and notes of memoirs. Ruth Praver Jhabvala has tried to recollect her memories associated with the Holocaust by compiling them in some lively narratives which good our emotions to sympathize with Hans Loewe, Dr. Franz Hochstadt, Mrs. Frieda Hochstadt and Judy.



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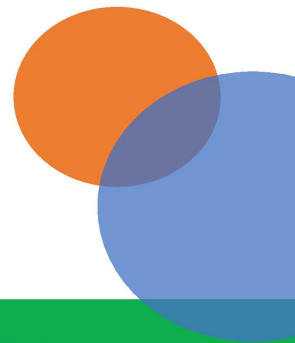
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S
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C
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A
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N

INDEX

No.	Title of the Paper	Author's Name	Page No.
01	Pandemic Pandemoniu and Emotional Well-Being	Dr. Umesh Tayade	05
02	A Study on Forecasting and Prospect of Postal Life Insurance in India	Mr. Pramod Sapkal & Dr. Ram Kulkarni	10
03	National Digital Library (Ndl) Is A Boon For Education and Research in India.	Shri. Amol Meshram	18
04	Caste in Omprakash Valmiki's ' <i>Joothan : A Dalit's Life</i> '	Mr. Madhukar Wankhede	21
05	Digital Payments System in India and E-payments : Problems and Prospects with Current Overview	Dr. Ankush Jadhav	25
06	A Critical Study of Major Constituents in The Literary Translation	Dr. Umaji Patil	38
07	A Study of the Finest Approaches Embraced by the Academic College Libraries in Goa	Ms. Jovita Lobo & Dr. Keshav Dhuri	41
08	Study the Impact of Online Education Mode on Mental Health of Secondary School Level Students	Dr. Jayashri Nemade	49
09	The Emergence of Coding Courses for Young Children and It's Impact on Their Cognitive Development in Gulbarga City	Mrs. Deepali Mali & Mrs. Dr. Geeta R. M	54
10	Development Schemes for Tribal Society in India : Problems and Challenges	Dr. P. D. Patil	58
11	Existentialism in Richard Wrights ' <i>The Outsider</i> '	Dr. Mahadev Waghmode	62
12	Online Learning Pedagogy in Higher Education in Lockdown Period	Mr. Kishor Waghmare	65
13	Traditional Research Methodology with New Trends	Ms. Suvarna Mangulikar	69
14	Information Warfare and National Security	Dr. Priyanath Ghosh	75
15	Kamala Das as a Poet : An Assessment	Dr. Sanjay Kulkarni	82
16	Indian Classic Writers a Flight from Humanity to Spirituality	Manojkumar Navse	85
17	Bridges between Culture : Understanding 'Transculturation' in Chinese American writers through Amy Tan	Neha Tripathi	89
18	Critical Analysis of New Eucation Policy 2020	Prof. Chitra Ashtekar	94
19	Role of Academic Libraries in Covid-19 Pandemic : Scope, Challenges, and Opportunities	Mr. Aamer Saleem & Mr. Shaikh Naem	100
20	Role of National Digital Library of India during Covid-19	Shekhar Dixit	104
21	Effect of Yoga on Minimum Muscular Fitness of Interschool Male Basketball Players	Mr. Navanath Sarode & Dr. D. K. Kamble	111
22	The Agrarian Crisis and the Challenges to the Development of Agriculture in Kerala	Basil Benny	116
23	The Aran Islands : The Art of Story-telling	Dr. Tushar Kamble	122
24	Traces of Transcendentalism in the Novels of Ruth Praver Jhabvala	Dr. Lakhan Gaidhane	125
25	Sadhana Amte's Samidha and Shobha Pawar's Translated Samidha : A Comparative Analysis	Dr. Sangeeta Avachar	128
26	A Conceptual Overview of Good and Service Tax (GST)	Dr. D. R. Panzade	135

Traces of Transcendentalism in the Novels of Ruth Praver Jhabvala

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Abstract:

Transcendentalism is a philosophical movement which was started in early 19th century during American literary era. Ralph Waldo Emerson, a key pioneer, put forward the fundamental ideas of transcendentalism including other as Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Amos Bronson Alcott. In 1820s, Americans were come under depression due to industrialization and hectic life schedules. Transcendentalists founded some separate groups for keeping their individuality so that they got better exposure for their ideas. Their opinions did not match with the current social issues and they tried to be separated themselves from others. It was closely related with the idea of living life like self-centered and self-motivated. Ruth Praver Jhabvala had varied experiences travelling of different parts of world. Many of her novels have close connections with transcendentalism regarding Indian philosophical themes.

Keywords: Transcendentalism, spiritual, Over-soul, travelling and philosophy.

Emerson and Thoreau propagated about solutions in terms of nature as supreme power and individuality of person. They discarded the very idea of Trinity but supported to the Indian philosophical views as if in some sort of acceptance. Emerson asserted on the Over-soul:

All goes to show that the soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs; is not a function, like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty, but a light; is not the intellect or the will, but the master of the intellect and will; is the background of our being, in which they lie, -- an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed. From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things, and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all. (Emerson, 1841)

He considered that Indian philosophical idea of spiritualization might be a solution. They discarded the very idea of Trinity but supported to the Indian philosophical views as if in some sort of acceptance. Spiritual experience through the meditation and different tactics of Yogas has always been an object of attraction for western travelers. It is asserted, "Spirituality is way of being and experiencing that comes about through awareness of transcendent dimension and that is characterized by certain identifiable values in regards to self, others, nature, life and whatever one considers to be the ultimate" (D. N. Elkins and other, 1988). Western travelers get attracted to India in search of spiritual bliss and life in isolation. It asserts here well:

Many people over the centuries undertook journeys to India. It came under longer, stronger cultural influences from Europe than any other Asian country. More was written about it than any other; more was known about it. Foreign writers (from a number of nations) produced more literature about India than Indians did. Its differences and oddities, so often described, became slightly devalued by time. So did the literature about it. (Jinarajadasa, 1921)



India has a long heritage of spiritual mysteries. It appears splendid and interesting for the world. Basically, India is a country where we can find the cluster of different religions and dogmas. People are mostly religious who follow its various rituals. Many places are the sites of attraction with its peculiar stance and locality. Foreigners visit these places to get knowledge of spirituality and peace of mind and Indian culture which is full of diversities and strange traditions.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala was among the followers of transcendentalist and many of her works indebted to the idea. Some of her characters have the similarities of transcendentalist and it makes clear that it is somehow in the writers' focus for living standard. Hans Loewe, in *The Householder*, is being introduced as a German traveler in India. He comes to India and wants to be acquainted with its culture, religion, meditation techniques and to gain knowledge of spirituality. He says, "So in my dreams what do I see suddenly? I see India. Yes, your marvelous India I see. I see a palm tree and temple. Under this palm tree who is sitting? . . . It's a holy man. What you call Sadhu, Right?" (HH 32). Prem, a protagonist, visits to Hans' house where he finds that Hans has been practicing the different positions of yoga and working on the spiritual aspects for a long time. Having acquainted with spirituality, Hans becomes anxious and over religious. He feels the existence of God within himself. He gets so much spiritually obsessed that he forgets everything other than the actuality of God. He experiences such incredible feelings of spirituality which he cannot express in words. He confesses, "I felt it, God consciousness, I felt Him moving here, here, at the base of my spine! . . . All Eternity is there seen like in a mirror!" (HH 44-45) Being westerner, he is not sure whether he would attain complete spiritual bliss as he speaks in an incongruous manner many times. These attributes of Hans seem to be acquainted with Transcendentalism. He tries to develop his thirst for highest satisfaction i.e. the idea of Over-soul by applying different tactics meditation.

Hans is a character who is being projected in continuous mental trauma and inner conflict. From the very beginning, he keeps himself busy in search of spiritual bliss. He elucidates his feelings, "My thoughts are wild and bad, I cannot control them . . . I try to gather them in one point . . . but - pfutch! They scatter wild like this" (HH 88). He has been trying to concentrate over the situation, but his previous experiences drag him away from spiritual thoughts. Once he cried in agony: "But I have tried – oh, my God, how have I tried!" (HH 46). He came to India to find out such a holy person or sadhu who would explain him well the spirituality. Before coming to Delhi, he wandered in different parts of country to find out such a fellow but in vain. He explains it well when he is talking with Prem, "The sadhus are right one must sit on nails and mortify the flesh . . . It must be mortified so the thoughts will be controlled" (HH 88).

The significance of *The Householder* from transcendentalist point of view becomes clear if we delve deep into the character of Hans Loewe. R. P. Jhabvala's mythological point of view becomes clear in the novel. He arrives at a vestibule of a cinema hall where he finds Prem has already been waiting for Raj, Prem's friend. Prem says that Raj would be there in any moment, Hans finds himself helpless to turn away from the place. His traumatic predicaments compel him to be introduced with Raj. Raj arrives there and they move to another coffee-house where Hans expresses his bliss of joy, "Today we will have such conversation that our minds will fly open and the understanding will come in with a big rush!" (HH 113). Their talk touches to different magnitudes: socialism, domestic problems and materialistic thoughts. He belongs to a

country in which humanity and relationships are subsidiary. Sometimes materialistic concepts lead to disappointment in life. It is because when one thinks about a person who has suffered a lot due to puzzled life of office work or its typical way of living. Hans explains it well, Hans insists on spirituality and peace of life. Hans feels completely disappointed at Delhi because whatever he has been expecting from the city nothing becomes fruitful. So, he decides to go to South India for gaining spiritual bliss.

Chidananda (Chid), "a British man comes to India in search of spirituality" (HD 21), is introduced in *Heat and Dust*. He had made his thoughts for coming India after attending "a lecture by a visiting swami in London" (HD 22). Having come in India, he meets with various sadhus and collects the knowledge on spirituality. He wears the dresses like "an Indian ascetic" (HH 21) and carries "beads and the begging bowl" (HH 23) in his hand for collecting his meals. He starts lecturing on spiritualism as he has gathered a vast experience of wandering and gaining knowledge of spirituality. He makes different tours from North to South in India. His quench for wandering bring him to Satipur where he meets again the Narrator "near the lake and Maji's hut" (HH 61) "groaning" and wailing as he has been "thrown out of the traveller's rest-house" (HH 62). His abrasive behaviour and western conditioning make his life difficult. He searches for perfect satisfaction and peace of mind through Indian philosophy of transcendentalism. He has come from a long way crossing many hurdles to gain the spiritual bliss.

To sum up, transcendentalism in India has is closely concerned with Indian philosophical themes of ancient practices. Ruth Praver Jhabvala's novels are filled with her spiritual studies of mythological books. She has brought together western-eastern philosophical views but rather her more concern is to rely on Indian spiritualism. Like transcendental, her characters come from a long across for gaining peace of mind and his individuality.

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