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**MYSTERIES AND MIRACLES OF AN INDIAN HOUSEHOLD**

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ABSTRACT

Human society is made up of divergent groups with various attitudes and mindsets. Most of the people are resilient, rebellious or accommodating. We have many laws, rules and principles to guide us. But above all these we have universal laws which though exist are not much cared for. Most of the families in India are bound to certain ethnicities. Though they boast off that they are modern and civilized, most of them are internally traditional while externally they tend to be sophisticated. Human attitude is that they want to lead a life that they love to, but unfortunately most of the women end up their dream life which never exists in reality. Who do you think is the reason behind it? Is it not the individual who is struggling through hardships and not knowing how to come out of them and lead a life of his/her own choice? May be if the perseverance and persistence are strong, every individual can shape their character and destiny on their own. It is quite alarming to see that an educated man and woman are also trapped in the innocent belief of accepting the designed destiny. Neither do they enjoy their life nor they allow their opposite partner to enjoy their life. What does marriage teach them? To be slaves, to be submissive or to be empathized? Why does an individual's life transform a lot after marriage? Be it a man or a woman, in most of the cases, life is really traumatic. This article is going to focus on the life of a couple who do not have any idea of what their priorities are and struggle to face the practical realities torturing their mind and soul. *The Householder*, written by Ruth Praver Jhabvala is a bildungsroman, in which the main character undergoes manifold experiences and builds a stable mind and character. The journey through the story makes every reader to travel through his/her inner self discovering a hidden personality within them.

.Keywords: *Bildungsroman, Householder, Upper Class, Traditional Beliefs.**Author(s) retain the copyright of this article*

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THE WOMAN OF LETTERS

The intellectual creator behind the story, Ruth Praver Jhabvala is a British, American novelist and also a screen writer. Born in Germany, emigrated to London, married to an Indian, settled in America, she had a vast exposure on divergent cultures of different countries which helped her to assess the attitudes of people. Many of the authors described her rightly as the 'rootless intellectual' and 'initiated outsider' and is undoubtedly evident through her writings on colonial and contemporary India. Her style on the portrayal of conventional world matches to Jane Austen's style. The depiction of Indian families, the struggle of Indians to adapt a social mobility, the confusion and clash between Eastern and Western ideals expresses herself as both an insider and detached observer presenting an inimitable style in the portrayal of Indian stories.

Perhaps her association with different societies made her to understand the feelings of isolation and their effect on Indian women or Manhattanites, the former controlled and constrained by too many traditions and the later loaded and troubled by too many options. On one hand most of her writings till 1960s represented the true picture of Indian characters, and on the other hand the stories of 1970 were pessimistic. Generally, writers perceive the world in diverse perspectives. When her writings are considered, the first phase were filled with delighted memories of India. Later on, may be her close association and observation lead to present more of acrimonious and critical aspects in India. But in the novels of the later phases, her discernment was again shifted showcasing India

as a promised land which had a wide scope for reconciliation of the East and the West.

RATIONALITY IN LIFE

The life of every married couple should either begin with empathizing or trying to empathize. If either of the one fail, they struggle hard. Marriage is acceptance for many. But do they really accept? Acceptance is not accepting everything blindly, whatever might be the attitude of the opposite partner. When they tend to accept things wholeheartedly, the family runs smoothly without much expectations. But either of them outwardly accepts and inwardly struggles to adjust, they cannot have a contented family life. When it comes to an arranged marriage, parents are very careful in selecting a partner for their son or daughter. They make thousand enquiries about the family, attitude, lineage, property and so on. But unfortunately, most of the parents do not realise that these do not matter much, if the relation and bonding between the couple is strong.

In the novel *The Householder* written in 1960s, Ruth Praver Jhabvala clearly shows how despite their education, every man and woman who needs to get married should be matured in thoughts and tuned for a life after marriage. Prem, the protagonist of the novel, though seems to be a simple and caring husband, he actually doesn't know what's the exact role of a husband. Perhaps he has a job, but he struggles hard to balance between the chickenfeed salary and the added expenses. He was married to Indu, rather submissive and naïve woman. In arranged marriages, like Prem and Indu's, the interference of the parents to make them adjust will escalate problems more than suppressing and they



become dumb to express their emotions. They forget that they should have a rational thinking in their arguments and actions.

Prem lost his father and his mother took the responsibility of his marriage. She did her best to see that her son gets well settled with a good wife. Like every mother, she felt her responsibility was only to search for a suitable bride. Prem enters his married life caught between illusions and impressions. Even after a long time of their marriage, he treats his wife as a stranger, failing to develop a strong relationship with her. He always treats him as a fiasco in his personal as well as his professional life. As an educated man, working in a reputed institution, Khanna Private college, dealing with students from rich families and living in a group of learned intellectuals, he doesn't come out of his conservative thoughts, instead he is devastated and distressed for his precarious pecuniary and public status. He believes that the role of a husband is more of a material provider than anything else. He fails to enjoy the moment that he is becoming a father and rather worries more about the additional burden that he had to carry.

TRANSITION FROM A YOUNG MAN TO A HOUSEHOLDER:

There are different stages in every human life. It doesn't remain the same for ever. The changes that they had to accept till they get married are an individual combat, but once they get married things change a lot. Why do the young people fail to understand that change is inevitable? They move for higher education to an unknown city, adjust with strangers, make new friends, but why do they fail to learn and live with a new partner? When Indu

becomes pregnant, he feels that either there should be a raise in his salary or his owners should reduce the rent. He tries, but in vain. Though he knew his employer and his landlord are exploiting him, he is helpless. May be in his tensed life, he is away from the reality and expects a fatherly treatment from the materialistic people both his employer and the landlord.

As a ray of hope, he moves towards spirituality to find solace from his puzzling and perplexing state. Jhabvala has rightly focused on the typical attitude of Indians that for every theist, when all the doors are closed, religion is the last resort. He also spends his time with a European couple. He does all these to escape from the worries of married life. Unfortunately, he had no control over his life, students, job but tries to mask his weakness and helplessness at home. Indu makes out that her husband cannot protect himself from the hard encounters of life. She suffers from hopeless and hapless household life. May be Prem's position was really traumatic, as Jhabvala depicts, "Prem is always haunted with a feeling of failure, He felt himself to be terrible inadequate as a husband, a teacher and as an adult altogether" (*The Householder*, 53).

SEARCH OF IDENTITY

The theme of Jhabvala's novels mainly cover romantic idealism and the search for womanhood. It is evident from her portrayal of women characters that they develop from enthusiasm to worthlessness, from boredom to brokenness. Unlike every woman Indu hopes for a happy married life. Though she is a bit conservative, she is intelligent enough to understand the harsh realities. Every Indian woman wants her husband to be a Rama and possess all the



heroic traits. Regrettably, Indu finds her husband as a low self-esteemed and self-assured person. Added to the fuel, Prem's middle-aged widow mother's domination suffocates her. Unable to lead a life in a cage, she leaves to her mother's house.

When Indu and Prem attend a party at Khanna's house, all the women at the party were silent spectators rather than engaging themselves in a lively conversation. Among all the woman, Mrs Khanna, was well dressed, cultured and also could show up her bossism. As Indu was pregnant, she craved for more sweets and she was not aware of the general etiquettes, Mrs Khanna orders the servant to take away the plate from her. Though Prem tries hard to explain that Indu was a good wife, it was only her pregnancy that made her to crave for more sweetmeats, he failed to do so.

INSIGHT INTO THE HIDDEN REALITIES

One day or the other day we have to come out of the shell, how hard the shell is, we need to break it. When Indu moves to her parent's house, Prem's finds himself as a complete failure. As Jhabvala says, "In his present mood it gave him a grim satisfaction to count up his various failures; he could not earn sufficient money; his career as a teacher was turning out to be unpromising; he had no real friend -even he had no real friend- even Raj, who had once been a real friend, had deserted him; he was not a successful husband.... It was because he was not a successful husband that she had gone away; he had not been able to make her obedient and respectful; if she had been obedient and respectful, she would not have dared to go away. Or if she had liked him better, she would not have wanted to go away" (*The Householder*, 85).

The hard truths of life. If one can analyse like Prem, may be the graph of the divorce rates can never rise. When she returns home, she doesn't care or bother about her mother-in-law or husband, she is a new woman, who had taken the entire charge of the household making her position strong and thereby making her husband realize the importance of a wife's status. Jhabvala's female lead Indu is more active than her male lead, Prem. In most of the middle class and lower middle-class families, whether they are arranged or love marriages, the problems that arise are surrounded with money. From a feminist's point of view, Prem's male domination can be viewed as unforgiving and unfeeling, but at the end of the story the reader feels it is a natural inheritance from the patriarchal society.

CONCLUSION

Jhabvala, though modern and an alien to Indian society, shows Indu as a woman, who surrenders to traditions rather than protesting against the atrocities against her. Though the things are much worse than the beginning for Prem, he is now successful as a householder. Many a time the readers sympathize with Prem and Indu and they wish they should empathize. Women like Indu always challenge and prove themselves to people like Mr Chaddha, who treat them as an inferior sex. May be Mr Chaddha should change his perception towards women. "The society of the ladies is said to have a very softening effect .. It is not for nothing, suggested Mr Khanna, that they are known as the gentle sex... It is good sometime to break off in the midst of toil...

And enjoy an hour's leisure and ease in their charming company, as our heroes of old, said Mr Chaddha, withdrew respite from their battles to have



their wounds dressed and their brows soothed by the hands of their consorts." (*The Householder*, 72).

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