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# “Contribution of Heat and Dust to Evergreen Elements I.E. Love and Culture”

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**Abstract – The treatment of love in its purest form has been overshadowed by the sensational acts carried out by the two British women. What makes this issue mostly striking is that Ruth Jhabvala, in place of focusing her attention on the relationship between Douglas and Olivia, or Inder La1 and Ritu, shifts it on the Nawab-Olivia and Narrator-Inder affairs, and thus making it clearly an issue dislocated from the usual location. This is exactly where the novel gets extra mileage. Otherwise the novel has all the interests of a sensational work**

## CONTRIBUTION OF HEAT AND DUST TO EVERGREEN ELEMENTS I.e. LOVE AND CULTURE”

Fiction of all ages and all countries has frequently treated love and sex and related matters with greater interests than any other single subject. Heat and Dust too has full contribution to these evergreen elements. The treatment here goes beyond usual geographical and cultural boundaries and thus adds dimensions to the subject. In the centre of the novel there are two British women, Olivia and the Narrator, who get bewitched by Indian spirituality, sensuality and also sexuality in their respective times. However, the treatment of love in its purest form has been overshadowed by the sensational acts carried out by the two British women. What makes this issue mostly striking is that Ruth Jhabvala, in place of focusing her attention on the relationship between Douglas and Olivia, or Inder La1 and Ritu, shifts it on the Nawab-Olivia and Narrator-Inder affairs, and thus making it clearly an issue dislocated from the usual location. This is exactly where the novel gets extra mileage. Otherwise the novel has all the interests of a sensational work. The so-called hidden sensuality of India and the overpowering sexuality of the Nawab of Khatm attract Olivia to venture outside the recommended confines of codes of conduct prevalent in both the societies. An almost similar incident some fifty years later with the Narrator and Inder La1 further adds to this particular theme an extra significance. It must be noted that during the Raj physical proximity with the natives of India has been almost abhorred by the British. The first case has surely upset the British moral standards and thus has proved detrimental to the concern of the ruling class in India. And even after the independence of India, although such incidents apparently cease to have political implications, they are not very easy-going affairs in both the societies.

Both the cases are ~ u r e l ya matter of personal choice and do not abide by the prevalent moral codes of the societies involved.

The clash between the codes of conduct and the individual aspiration has its origin somewhere in the life-style of the participants. The k i d of environment Olivia lives in does not assure her of a life worth living up to her expectations. She feels fairly bored all alone. Douglas is too busy to give her company, and Olivia has almost nothing to do all through the day. The codes of conduct she is expected to abide by are more political than cultural in nature and strictures within the Civil Lines and strangeness outside coupled with Indian heat and OTHER ISSUES AND NON-ISSUES dust narrow down her life almost to insignificance which she detests. Both geographically and culturally, thus, Olivia finds herself rather suffocated. Secondly, her natural expectation of having a baby is also very strong and frustrated for a long period of time. Therefore, Olivia needed an avenue to channelize her expectations and frustrations. Her individual desires strongly make way through a hazardous path, which goes against the British imperialism in India. Her attitudes against India, therefore, appear quite out of tune with those of her compatriots. The Nawab's position is no better. The British restrictions on his power and income has frustrated him, his personal conjugal life is in a bad shape, and by establishing a relationship with Douglas's wife he could satisfy himself both ways-finding an emotional solution and directing his vengeance against the British by seducing one of the white women. Olivia's escapade has been severely criticized by her own people. It takes generations to reconcile with the scandalous affair. What seemed blasphemous to Tessie and Beth has finally become a story of romantic escapade to the parents of the Narrator. In India too the situation is almost similar:

"All those people are dead, and even if any of them should be left alive somewhere, there is no one to be interested in their doings" . Karim too, jokingly dismisses his uncle's 'adventures' as one done by a 'naughty boy.' In the Narrator's case, too, the traditional injunctions fail to restrict her movement. First, she lives alone, far away from her home; secondly, she, for some reasons, finds Indian people friendly and the Indian way of living together much more emotionally fulfilling than her own; and thirdly, she is determined to explore exactly what happened to Olivia through her own experience of similar circumstances. Therefore, her intimacy with Inder Lal is not just coincidental; rather it is the Narrator who occupies herself in a situation for herself with a determination without much surge of emotionality involved in it. Inder Lal's situation too is not very far away from the Nawab's. An already perturbed man in his conjugal and professional life, he too needed some physical and emotional respite and space. The Narrator's advances just accelerate his uncared for needs, which he could not perhaps achieve through his own initiative. However, the way Satipur people seem to ignore the extramarital affairs between the Narrator and Inder Lal, and also between the Narrator and Chid, may not be all realistic in terms of the place and time in which such incidents take place. Satipur is basically a semi-urban Indian habitation and in the 1970s such incidents are expected to create some ripples in society than is narrated in the story. Some extent of urbanization and westernization is perhaps no proper excuse to make such things tolerable to common people. If Ruth Jhabvala wants to convince readers that westernization of India may make extramarital love, a smooth affair, she is wrong. Even today's western society too may often react unfavourably to such cases. The US President Bill Clinton and Monica scandal may authenticate the western reservations. The attitudes to the issue from the time of Nawab-Olivia to that of Narrator-Inder are understandably different; but the difference is one of degree, not of kind. However, the western notion on Indian sexuality itself is perverted; so is the Indian notion of the western sexuality. What Mrs. Saunders thinks of Indian servants-"It's not good to let them see you in bed .... But you don't know what goes on in their heads" (119)-is for them a commonly accepted notion about the Indian in general. Even Major Minnies too recommends a relationship from a safe distance. The Indian notion of the West, on the other hand, is no better. On the one hand, Vatsyayana's Kamasutra, the images on the walls of Indian temples, caves, and the ancient stories, and on the other, western popular films, photographs and the behavior of the couples visiting India have just further aggravated the popular notions of both the camps. Both the sides, therefore, love to imagine in negative terms about the other halves and none is impartial and realistic on the issue. Bertrand Russell comments that there are three extra rational activities in modern world-religion, war and love. However, love is not anti-rational, that is to say, a reasonable man may reasonably rejoice in its existence. Society, however, has its own demands, and the prevalent code is expected to be OTHER

ISSUES AND NON-ISSUES honoured by individuals. When a man and a woman come together on the basis of intimacy, there is an urge to create an emotional space between them. What kind of bond existed between Olivia and the Nawab, or that between the Narrator and Inder? Are they Platonic attachment, ardent love, or are their liaisons just charged with physical desires without serious emotional qualities which did not attain any kind of satisfactory goal, or did they just come together out of some compulsion, or were they just excuses for sexual gratification? The involvement of Olivia with the Nawab seems to be out of sheer boredom. Inder's case is more or less similar. The Narrator undertakes experimentation. Neither from an individual point of view, nor from social, are both the relationships satisfactory. They are frustrating and almost meaningless. Olivia loves Douglas, this might be true; but her boredom and desire for a baby do not socially justify her involvement with the Nawab to the degree she goes. Her attachment to the Nawab is again genuine; but she aborts the baby possibly by him. On the other hand, the Narrator also fails to be convincing. She comes to India, befriends Inder more rationally than emotionally, gets pregnant by him and finally decides to get her baby-all these are rather cheaper stuff for a sensational novel. At the core she never feels for Inder Lal and never thinks in terms of a lasting relationship. It must be remembered that cultures do not pose any problem on their way toward intimate relationships. Individual desires get the upper hand in both the cases. However, as mature agents of cultural interaction, both the characters are disappointing for no cultures recommend sex without proper love between two individuals. Furthermore, the very structure of the novel becomes more of a hindrance than help to the understanding of the characters and the situations. In addition to these heterosexual relationships there are other forms of sexual relations treated in the novel. Ruth Jhabvala is not an outspoken novelist, especially if it is about sex. Though never uttered properly, it seems very probable the Nawab and Harry maintain a sort of homosexual attachment. Ruth Jhabvala does not depict their behavioural pattern directly. Conclusions have to be drawn by the readers if at all the relationship is based on homosexuality. With the depiction of sex there are some metaphors for sexlessness also. Reference to the hijras, eunuchs, serves this aspect. Both the periods in the novel have the demonstrations of hijra dances. However, neither homosexuality nor sexlessness counts much in the narrative of the novel. It is the affairs of Olivia-Nawab and Narrator-Inder that figure more significantly and Ruth Jhabvala's focus too rests on these pairs. These two relationships can be interpreted in terms of individual, social and also political proportions. The irony is that sexually the most immoral acts are taking place in Satipur, literally speaking, a habitation of the virtuous women. It is the foreign elements that make this otherwise virtuous place immoral. The considerations on the basis 'of colour give these relationships an overtly political significance. Seductions of British women by Indian men have of

course political message that indirectly may suggest the response of the dominated to the dominant when subjugation becomes an unavoidable reality and the subjugated need psychological relief by any means whatsoever (Burrwallah). What type of India is it where such things are taking place? Obviously, it is de-Indianized India. The Nawab, Inder Lal, Dr. Gopal, Karim and Kitty represent this new India. Satipur remains almost the same, but all saties, virtuous women, are gone; old women like Maji move forward and backward in the periphery. Things fall apart; centre can hold neither love nor healthy sex, neither in the Indian way nor in the western

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