

# DICHOTOMY BETWEEN DISSIMILAR IDEOLOGIES IN RUTH JHABVALA'S *GET READY FOR BATTLE*

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**Abstract** - Ruth Praver Jhabvala has achieved international reputation as the most popular novelist of social and economic problems of the present century. She writes about possibly the only social segment of urban India that she knows at first hand. Her distinction is modified and narrowed down by the rather limited quality of her literary achievement, which is, in part, the inevitable result of her choice and in part, the artistic outcome of her creativity. It lies in her being intensely aware of her limitations. Such fundamental and basic values of life as love, justice, beauty, sympathy, honesty, humbleness and equality receded into the background and man had become the greatest enemy of man. Jhabvala's *Get Ready for Battle* (1962) is concerned with Indian social and domestic problems. The novel condemns dishonesty, hypocrisy and exploitation of the poor. The novel deals with the materialistic society and its corrupt values, which make the life of the poor miserable and hard. The paper focuses on the sense of misunderstanding and incompatibility which has taken a serious turn due to the ideological differences between Gulzari Lal and his wife, Sarla Devi. Both are totally different by nature. Gulzari Lal and Sarla Devi belong to two entirely different worlds. She cares least for worldly prosperity whereas Gulzari Lal is a materialist to the core. Sarla Devi is engaged in fighting for the rights of the poor people of Bundi Busti against Government and moneyed people like her husband Gulzari Lal and son Vishnu who always concerned about their power-base or money-making. Thus, one is materialistic and the other is idealistic. All these lead to clash between husband and wife.

**Index Terms** - Dichotomy, hypocrisy, exploitation, materialistic, misunderstanding, incompatibility, ideological differences, power-base or money-making, clash.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Jhabvala's *Get Ready for Battle* (1962) is concerned with Indian social and domestic problems. The novel draws a sharp yet compassionate portrait of middle-class family life in contemporary Delhi. Through the conflicting ambitions, business intrigues and the personal and emotional entanglements, she gently mocks the self-seeking nature of this group of people who are ready for battle with each other and themselves. But beneath this humorous and ironic study of personal conflicts, we catch a glimpse of India's terrifying social problems – and of the deep moral consciousness which may prove her salvation. Guardian observes, 'One questions whether any western writer has had a keener, cooler understanding of the temperament of urban India.' It is felt that the novel arose from her personal and the witnessed experiences. "Jhabvala is successful eminently in projecting the personal dilemmas, individual and familial predicaments of this society in post-independence urban India" [1].

Jhabvala, in the novel presents different types of characters with different types of nature. Among them, some are materialistic or selfish while the others are selfless. Jhabvala, through the characters, discusses about different kinds of people living in the society. There are such people who are materialistic by nature. They are madly after money-making and always ready to do the worst thing. Such kind of people are also selfish who look only for their own profit and do nothing for the society, while there are other people also who are selfless. They are ready to do work for the society and for the humankind. They are ever ready to help the poor people and their whole life passes for the upliftment of the other people. Gandhiji, Vinoba Bhave, and Mother Teresa etc. are the specimen of such type of people.

## II. DISCUSSION

In the novel, *Get Ready for Battle* misunderstanding and incompatibility have taken a serious turn due to ideological differences between Gulzari Lal and Sarla Devi. Both are totally different by nature. Gulzari Lal and Sarla Devi belong to two entirely different worlds. She cares least for worldly prosperity whereas Gulzari Lal is a materialist to the core. Sarla Devi is engaged in fighting for the rights of the poor people of Bundi Busti against Government and moneyed people like her husband Gulzari Lal and son Vishnu who always concerned about their power-base or money-making. Thus, one is materialistic and the other is idealistic. Gulzari Lal always enjoys his own parties, he likes assembling influential people in his house and he likes being a host and seeing people go satisfied by his expensive drinks and his food, while Sarla Devi believes in simplicity and high moral principles. She wants to live by her conscience. All these lead to clash between husband and wife. Vishnu's friend Gautam gives his opinion about Gulzari Lal to Vishnu:

He is to me the worst type of man, attached to money and money-making and existing not as a man but only through the things he possesses, like his car, his house, his mistress. Women and gold, as Sri Ramakrishna has said, these are the worst temptations in the life of man, and your father has not only tasted them but has swallowed them whole [2].

Gautam admires Sarla Devi to Vishnu: "How I admire your mother, she has shaken off everything, all the things that due to her station in life had been piled on to her" [3].

The dichotomy between two different minds at last leads to separation between them. They fall apart. Sarla Devi leaves her husband and goes to live with her brother, Brij Mohan. She leaves her millionaire husband only for the sake of the poor people. Having stayed away from her husband, she has turned her attention to social work. She always believes that 'to do' is her duty. She struggles against the municipal authorities who wanted to evict the people of Bundi Busti from they have been living for the last fifteen years. She does all these without her own profit. When Kusum visits Sarla Devi, Sarla Devi asks her, "You have come to talk about Bundi Busti —" [4]. At that time her brother Brij Mohan cries to her: "Bundi Busti! Your head has become upside down with all these Bundi Bustis of yours, so when people come and talk with you on important business, all you can think of is Bundi Busti, Bundi Busti!" [5]. In this way, Sarla Devi's favourite dream is always to help the poor people. On the other hand, Gulzari Lal's favourite dream is of himself as a successful family man. He is the provider, the mainstay, the prop behind his son, his daughter-in-law and his little grand child and all they have to do is to be happy and comfortable in the luxurious setting which he has devised for them. Gulzari Lal's mistress Kusum also says to him: "You are busy all day in your office, only work work, money money; what goes on in the home is nothing to you. . ." [6]. Gulzari Lal thinking of Sarla Devi's hundreds of interests away from him, her swamis and politicians, her refusal ever to be a wife such as he wants and thinks he has a right to expect and asks her: 'Did you ever live any other way?' In her answer Sarla Devi says to him, "Please don't start to quarrel with me now. It is all over, and where was your fault and where was my fault, that it is better not to discuss any more." [7]. The clash between two different minds, at last, ends legally with divorce.

Jhabvala also refers to another materialist Kusum, the mistress of Gulzari Lal. Kusum is selfish and hypocrite by nature. She is a widow of an Army officer. In the absence of Sarla Devi, she behaves like Gulzari Lal's wife in his house. She always seeks her security and settlement in Gulzari Lal's house. For her materialism is everything. On the other side, Gulzari Lal has been used to finding Kusum when he comes home in the evenings, and it is hard for him to have to do without her. For eight years now she has been always there: she would have his bath ready for him, serve him with drinks, massage his legs and at the same time she entertains him with accounts of all she has been doing during the day, whom she has seen and what gossip she has heard. Her love for Gulzari Lal is a calculated love. She wants him to take divorce from Sarla Devi so that she can marry him and be his legal heir. The respect, which she has for the conventional and traditional ways of life, is only at the superficial level. Hers is a measured morality. The way she behaves with Mala and Pritti is only at superficial level. It appears when Mala wants to go with Vishnu at Chandnipat where Vishnu wants to start his new business. At that time Kusum tells Gulzari Lal, "Let them go, then it will be only you and I, and what times we shall have together! Soon there will be your divorce. It must be so . . . Let them go. We shall be young again." [8]. At last, she feels comfort only when Gulzari Lal takes divorce from Sarla Devi. Thus, Kusum is also materialistic.

There is also a little bit reference to Vishnu's materialistic nature. Vishnu always follows his father's footsteps. Vishnu remains happy with his westernized friends. He never gives any heed to his wife. Like his father, he has interest only in business. He never takes advice from her mother but accepts his father's path easily. When Sarla Devi asks his help for the people of Bundi Busti, he does not give proper attendance. Sarla Devi always tries to give him advice, but he never gives responses to her. Moreover, Sarla Devi with her passionate nature, at last, tells him to leave his father and engage in battle on his own. Thus, Vishnu is also by nature a materialist. "The novel deals with the materialistic society and its corrupt values, which make the life of the poor miserable and hard. Here, the sense of misunderstanding and incompatibility has taken a serious turn due to the ideological differences between Gulzari Lal and his wife, Sarla Devi" [9].

### III. CONCLUSION

Jhabvala's *Get Ready for Battle* (1962) is concerned with Indian social and domestic problems. The novel condemns dishonesty, hypocrisy and exploitation of the poor. The novel deals with the materialistic society and its corrupt values, which make the life of the poor miserable and hard. Here, the sense of misunderstanding and incompatibility has taken a serious turn due to the ideological differences between Gulzari Lal and his wife, Sarla Devi. Jhabvala's portrayal of Kusum shows the psychology of the aging women and also moral degeneration prevailing in the Indian society.

Jhabvala, in the novel, shows the dichotomy between materialism and selflessness through different characters with main focus on Gulzari Lal and Sarla Devi. Here, she highlights the battle between the two types of value systems or two types of approaches to life. Gulzari Lal is totally materialistic while Sarla Devi is totally idealistic. She adopts Gandhian idealism throughout her life. For her, materialism is nothing, while for Kusum materialism is everything. The way Kusum behaves with Gulzari Lal, Mala and Pritti is totally materialistic. Like his father, Vishnu is also materialistic. However, Sarla Devi remains selfless throughout the novel. We can compare her work with the work of Gandhiji, Mother Teresa etc. Due to the temperamental differences, the clash takes place among the characters.

### IV. REFERENCES

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