



Female Characters in the Major Novels of R. P. Jhabvala and Kamala Markandaya

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Ruth Praver Jhabvala and kamala Markandaya are Indian woman novelists in English. They present India and Indian image in their fiction. They also present woman as the center of concern in their novels. They depict woman's issues and problems in their novels in the novel to which She Will, Jhabvala has given us, a beguiling tale of a young girl named Amrita and her love affair with Hari. While both families cook up their own plans for their children's futures, the two lovers are busy with their separate illusions.

At the last moment, they realize that life has led them all to a new and very different beginning. Amrita is the daughter of Radha and the granddaughter of Rai bahadur. She belongs to rich class of society. She likes simplicity in everything. She is a B.A. from Lady Wilmot College in Delhi. She works as a part time announcer at the All India Radio. Hari sahani is Amrita's colleague. He belongs to a low middle class family. Both of them develop love relationship. Hari is a romantic youth, to whom Amrita is 'a goddess' of whom he likes to think himself quite unworthy.

Hari is a good son. He is the pride and joy of a mother who has brought him up to feel a proper regard for his sisters and his brothers. He enjoys very heartily the food she (his mother) cooks for him with such loving care. He is sociable, warmly appreciative of a pretty face and figure. He is possessed of a healthy appetite. He is described as a true son of India. Hari has one weakness that he is on the verge of duplicity in his love-relationship. He is symptomatic of the weakness of the characters of the Indian youths.

Amrita is self-superior to that of Hari. Amrita (she) is more daring than Hari. Even she is ready to elope with Hari. She is not rebel but she does not care for the values of her own class. When her mother insults Hari and her colleagues only because of their low-social background, she opposes her mother. She reminds her of her simple & poor idealist husband. In fact, the mother and daughter are studies in contrast. Radha insists that Hari is not fit to speak with a girl (Amrita) of good family. She has an intense dislike to Hari only because he belongs to a class of low social scale. She wants to arrange Amrita's marriage with the America – returned son of Delhi socialite woman Ram Prasad Khanna. As per the traditional custom, the prospective bride is first shown to woman Ram Prasad. After her initial approval, she could be allowed to meet the prospective bridegroom. A grand party is arranged to fulfill this purpose. Nevertheless, the real purpose is kept hidden secret from Amrita. Yet Amrita's dismissive response to Lady Ram Prasad spoils Radha's plan. Unlike her mother, she does not want pompous life. She only likes simplicity in everything. While Radha wants very prosperous and luxurious life like her sister Tara – Mathur. However, Amrita does not like it. She only wants to be Hari's wife.

Meanwhile Hari marries Sushila Anand because she is sexually more attractive than Amrita. It is not the case that Hari is a bad boy. Nevertheless, being a traditional boy, he accepts traditional marriage system i.e. arranged marriage system. His duplicity in his love relationship is symptomatic of the weakness of the characters of the Indian youths. After Hari's marriage, Amrita accepts Krishna sen

Gupta's proposal for marriage. Krishna is English educated. He belongs to Bengali family. He has been working as a Delhi College teacher. He stays with Radha's family in Delhi as a paying guest. Then he marries Amrita.

Pankaj Bhan asserts, "Amrita in 'To whom she will' is a young adolescent idealist of this sort who falls in romantic love with Hari, a feckless Youngman hailing from a lower middle class family. In spite of the advice of her family and almost all her relatives, she persists in her resolve to marry the Youngman of her choice. It is the vacillations on the part of the none-too-serious Youngman himself that makes her aware of the reality and she settles for Krishna sen Gupta, an earnest and deserving Youngman who belongs to their 'community' and who has the blessings of her family as well."

Jhabvala's Booker prize novel *Heat and Dust* is a love story. It presents two different periods - the 1920s and the 1970s. Olivia is a bored colonial wife. She is married to an English officer, Douglas Rivers. She falls in love with the local nawab, a minor Indian prince. Olivia is an aesthete. She loves music and plays on the piano with competence. The grand opulence of the palace and the sumptuous royal dinner satisfy Olivia's aesthetic sense. Naturally, the aesthete in Olivia feels irresistibly drawn towards him. Olivia is obsessed with the stereotypical image of the princely India. She fails to see its obverse side that of decadence, cruelty, venality etc. She becomes pregnant and has an abortion. She abandons her husband. After fifty years, her step-granddaughter travels to India. She (the narrator) wants to investigate the enigma of the family scandal. She stays in the town where her grandfather and Olivia lived fifty years before. She ventures into experiences similar to Olivia's adventures. She falls in love with an Indian man, a clerk named Inder Lal. She also becomes pregnant but she decides to have the child. Olivia and the narrator find similar picture of heat, dust, sickness, misery, poverty, and dishonesty in India. The grand daughter's experiences are quite similar to Olivia's. In fact, one wonders whether she is consciously mimicking Olivia.

Judy is the central figure in *A Backward Place*. Judy is an English woman married to an Indian named Bal. She possesses what Etta and Clarissa lack. She also presents a different kind of response to India. She is deemed to have attained ineluctable peace in unquestioned surrender to India. She is the most lovable of the European expatriates in India in this novel. She is cheerful by nature. She is married to Bal. Judy and Bal met in London, when they attended a conference of International youth. Now they live in a middle class district of Delhi. In spite of her foreign background, she adjusts herself in Bal's middle-class family. Though married in a cross-cultural context, she has made conscious attempts to identify with the land of her adoption and be part of its social and cultural ethos. She wears a sari, puts her hair up in a bun. She also speaks Hindi and interacts with everyone in her husband's home. She is cheerful by nature. She is a loving mother to her children. She is also kind to a poor, old-dependent like Bhauji. She is affectionate to her illiterate, ignorant sister-in-law. Judy earns livelihood for her family as her husband Bal is a careless householder.

In Kamala Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury* Pramela is a female character. Pramela is a lovable and sensitive young woman. She leads a different kind of life. She is an idealized stereotyped girl who symbolizes Indian traditions and culture. She is deprived of love even within married life. She exhibits great patience, the spirit of sacrifice and love. Kit, her husband who is an Anglophile does not reciprocate her feelings of love. Her love is subdued and is ultimately sublimated to the social cause; when she becomes a helping partner of an English Missionary Hicky in maintaining a school in a village. Govind, a great Indian revolutionary develops intense love for her. Despite her responding to it from the core of heart, this love does not flower and she is burnt up within the school by the Indians. Hereafter we discern the transformation of Kit, her husband, who repents but all in vain. Pramela is steeped in Indian tradition culture. According to K.S. Srinivasa Iyenger, Pramela is the sweetest female character drawn by Kamala Markandaya.

In Nector 'In Sieve', Kamala Markandaya portrays one of the finest drawn portraits of a representative Indian self in Indian fiction in English. Rukmani is the youngest of the four daughters of a prosperous village headman. But Rukmani's father's prestige diminished. So she has to marry a tenant farmer Nathan who is poor but loving and careful. She wants to live a life of dignity enlivened by the joy of living. In the early days of her married life, Rukmani has food in plenty for two people. Rukmani struggles hard to survive the relentless strokes of Nature and society. However, her calm and placid life suddenly begins to change under the impact of the industrialization i.e. the establishment of a tannery by an Englishman. The building of tannery brings about a change in the life of Rukmani and her village. From the very beginning Rukmani opposes the advent of tannery, the symbol of modernity and industrialization which spoils the natural calm and beauty of the countryside. Rukmani feels great pain in her heart when her tranquil and serene life is spoilt by the din and bustle, the filth and dirt. The loss not only of natural beauty but also of human virtues and values is the natural outcome of industry. The sweet peace and tranquility of the village fade away giving rise to the urban squalor and vice. Rukmani grows from a young child into a married girl of twelve, then a young wife and finally an old mother figure. She loses many things in the process of growth. The most painful of all being loss is of her husband. She has also lost five of her six children and who is old and lonely now. Yet she retains her fundamental, loving and lovable humanity and dignity.

In Kamala Markandaya's *A Hand of Rice*, we have a female figure named Nalini, daughter of a tailor Apu. She emerges as a stronger character in the novel. She helps Ravi, the protagonist and makes him respectable and honorable person. By marrying Nalini, Ravi starts life afresh under her love and inspiration. Nalini's pure love inspires him to abandon his immoral ways. For her sake, Ravi decides to reform himself completely. Extreme poverty leads him to violence again. Once he joins a mob with a stone in his hand, but he drops it soon because of Nalini's influence on him. Like Rukmani she stands for the sweetness of home and hearth and a healthy traditional life. Nalini exercises a very powerful influence on the life of Ravi turning him into a respectable and honorable person. Thus she sustains him through all his struggles as a wife, guide, friend and philosopher. Though not very strong, Nalini still works as a force, to be reckoned with, to check him from straying. Sometimes even her voice was a source of consolation and solace to the wounded Ravi. To sum up, we can say that by the force of her character she emerges stronger than Ravi while Ravi avoids the vicissitudes of life; she faces them boldly and proves to be a blessing in disguise in Ravi's life. She awakens: "within him an itch to better their lot. He contrasts the little he can offer his wife, with the luxury of the houses he visits in the course of his work."

To sum up, in R. P. Jhabvala's novels *To Whom She Will*, *Heat and Dust* and *A Backward Place*, there are different aspects of female figures. Amrita stands for the theme of choice versus arranged marriage. She rebels arranged marriage system to marry Hari of a lower middle class family. She is more daring than Hari. Even she is ready to elope with Hari. She is not a rebel but she does not care for the values of her own class. She only likes simplicity in everything. Though her mother does not want Hari to be her husband; she only wants to be Hari's wife. Only after Hari's marriage with Sushila, She agrees to marry with Krishna Sen Gupta of her mother's choice. In *Heat and Dust*, Olivia Rivers has longing for passion and independence; she is drawn into the spell of the Nawab of Khatm. She develops extra-marital relationship with him. It is not the case that she does not love her husband Douglas Rivers but she feels suffocated by inbred group. She is suffocated by social constraints of her position as the wife of an important English civil servant and she finds it difficult to adjust to life in the British colonial community of Satipur. She is a beautiful, spoiled and spirited young woman. Her illicit relations with the Nawab results into pregnancy. She is willing to give up the safety of everything she has ever known to become the lover of an Indian with minor royal ties. Her husband divorces her and leaves her in India alone. In *A Backward Place*, Judy is a careful householder and she carries all the responsibilities on the back of her shoulder as her husband Bal is careless householder. Her husband's decision to settle in Bombay puts her in dilemma. She has

struggle with herself-between her rationalself and her love and loyalty for her family. Her rational westernself is at war with the demands of Bal and her family. She has undergone intense struggle between her western rationality and an emotional and Indian response. She assimilates herself in Indian culture .However, it is at great cost.

Kamala Markandya's female characters such as Rukmani, Premela and Nalini all have asserted their identity in their own way. They have been in quest to locate their acceptable place and identity. Nearly all of Markandaya's women characters exhibit a positive and optimistic outlook on life and emerge much stronger than their male counterparts. Each one of them responds in her unique way to her dreams for a better and meaningful life. By exercising their own free will, exhibiting their own self, they get fulfilment and recognition in life. In this way they are able to establish their true identity. In her novels Kamala Markandaya has shown that women are not lesser human beings, rather they are sometimes more dignified than men because of their greater human virtues and qualities. It is they who enhance the beauty and charm of life and provide grace and dignity to it. They provide the solid foundation to the edifice of family which is impossible without their active participation. They need to be given their rightful place and dignity in the family and society for their well-being. Markandaya has made us hear the pronounced voice of women in her fiction, as it may lead to the welfare of entire mankind. The suppression of the feminist voice may cause havoc in our life

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