

EXPLORING MULTICULTURALISM IN RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA'S NOVELS: A FOCUS ON HEAT AND DUST AND NEW DOMINION

Abstract

This chapter provides an extensive exploration of the literary contributions of Ruth Praver Jhabvala, a distinguished author and screenwriter, with a particular emphasis on her notable novels, "Heat and Dust" and "New Dominion." Within the realm of her literary repertoire, this chapter centers on the pervasive and profoundly meaningful theme of multiculturalism. By means of a comprehensive examination of characters, settings, and narrative strategies, the primary objective of this chapter is to untangle the intricate layers and subtle facets of multiculturalism as masterfully depicted in Jhabvala's literary creations.

Keywords: Colonialism, multiculturalism, immigrant experience, gender, imperialism

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I. INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism in India after gaining independence in 1947 has been deeply influenced by the legacy of colonial rule. British colonialism, which spanned over two centuries, had a significant impact on India's diverse cultural landscape. The colonial administration's policies often exacerbated communal tensions and class divisions, leading to a complex and sometimes fraught post-independence multicultural society. However, India's founding leaders recognized the importance of unity in diversity and enshrined secularism and religious freedom in the Constitution. This commitment to pluralism has allowed India to preserve and celebrate its rich tapestry of languages, religions, and traditions, making it a shining example of multiculturalism in the modern world. Looking towards the importance of literature in this sense, Lionel Trilling says that “the novel is a perpetual quest for realities, whose quest the direction of man’s soul.”¹ Despite challenges, India continues to embrace its multicultural identity, fostering coexistence among various communities and contributing to its vibrant and dynamic society. Ramchandra Guha rightly says, “India is an experiment in democracy that is running remarkably well.”² (2007)

Homi K. Bhabha, a renowned postcolonial theorist, has shed light on the enduring impact of British colonialism in the post-independence era of many former colonies, including India. Bhabha's work underscores how colonialism left an indelible mark on the socio-cultural, political, and economic landscape of these nations. In India, for instance, the British legacy is evident in the administrative and legal systems, educational institutions, and the English language, which continues to be widely used for communication and governance. Bhabha's insights also emphasize the complex interplay of cultures and identities that emerged as a result of colonialism, leading to hybrid identities and cultural tensions. Moreover, he argues that the legacy of colonialism persists in post-independence power structures and inequalities, highlighting the need for continued efforts to decolonize institutions and foster genuine autonomy. Bhabha's work serves as a critical lens through which we can understand the profound and multifaceted impact of British colonialism on post-independence nations like India. Pramod K. Nayar describes certain facts concerning Homi K. Bhabha’s theory:

Bhabha argues that the stereotype is an indication not of the stable and supreme power of the coloniser, but rather of the fractured nature of the colonial power. What is already known or established has to be endlessly confirmed through repetitions. For Bhabha, this need for repetition points to a lack of certainty about the stereotypes, which indicates their essentially unstable and constructed nature. The coloniser can construct his identity only through the stereotype of the Other. (2008:27)³

Ruth Praver Jhabvala's literary career is marked by a profound exploration of multiculturalism, often drawing from her personal experiences as a German-Jewish author living in India. This chapter embarks on a journey to dissect and comprehend the intricate tapestry of cultures that her novels *Heat and Dust* and *New Dominion* present. These novels, set in different time periods and locations, provide an intriguing canvas for the examination of multiculturalism in diverse contexts.

II. RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA: A MULTICULTURAL LIFE

Ruth Praver Jhabvala's life was a testament to the rich tapestry of multiculturalism. Born in Germany in 1927 to Polish-Jewish parents, she fled the Nazi regime with her family, eventually settling in England. Her early exposure to diverse European cultures laid the foundation for her keen understanding of human complexities and cultural dynamics. In 1951, she married Cyrus Jhabvala, an Indian architect, which marked the beginning of her deep connection with India. This multicultural marriage led her to make India her home, a place where she thrived as a writer and screenwriter. Jhabvala's unique background, shaped by her German-Jewish heritage and her later immersion in Indian culture, enriched her literary works, making her a celebrated author whose stories transcended borders and illuminated the intricate nuances of multiculturalism.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala's literary contributions stand as a remarkable exploration of multiculturalism in the realm of literature. With a pen that effortlessly bridged the gap between cultures, she crafted narratives that vividly depicted the intersections and clashes of diverse worlds. Her novels and short stories, often set in India and other multicultural settings, delved into the complexities of identity, migration, and the human experience in a globalized world. Jhabvala's masterful storytelling, informed by her own multicultural background, offered readers a profound understanding of the evolving dynamics between cultures and individuals. . In an interview with Mr Ramlal G. Agarwal, Jhabvala also expresses her deep feelings for the poor as she states, "I've always moved up and down the social scale quite freely. I think – though only, as I say, among the urban, upper middle and lower middle classes. I haven't lived among the poor, and so obviously I can't write about them directly, although I like to think that they are there indirectly"⁴ (1974:36). Through her works, she championed the idea that the human spirit can adapt, evolve, and find connection amidst the most intricate web of cultural diversity.

III. HEAT AND DUST - BRIDGING TWO ERAS AND CULTURES

In Ruth Praver Jhabvala's novel *Heat and Dust*, the narrative structure serves as a captivating vehicle for the exploration of two distinct yet interconnected worlds: the British colonial past and contemporary India. Through a masterful use of dual narratives, Jhabvala artfully juxtaposes these two temporal realms, inviting readers to navigate the intricate intersections of history and modernity. Jhabvala herself tells in one interview, "I wrote it differently from the other. I wrote great blocks of present time and then great blocks of 1923."⁵ One narrative strand unfurls in the bygone era of British colonialism, evoking the opulence and constraints of that period. Simultaneously, the contemporary narrative offers a contrasting lens into modern India, pulsating with vibrant colors, cultural diversity, and the echoes of a complex past. This dual narrative structure not only magnifies the cultural dissonance between the two epochs but also unearths the enduring reverberations of colonialism on the lives and identities of the characters. It is within this literary tapestry that Jhabvala masterfully examines the timeless themes of love, desire, and the inexorable march of history in a narrative that is as compelling as it is thought-provoking.

- 1. Cultural Clashes:** The novel is a rich tapestry of characters and their interactions that vividly portrays cultural clashes and assimilation. Set against the backdrop of British colonial India and contemporary India, the novel features a diverse array of characters

from different cultural backgrounds. These characters, whether British colonizers or Indian natives, navigate a complex web of social norms, traditions, and personal desires. Through their interactions, Jhabvala illuminates the cultural clashes that arise as a result of British imperialism and its impact on Indian society. The British colonizers bring their own set of values, customs, and prejudices, which often clash with the deeply rooted traditions of India. This clash is particularly evident in the relationships between characters, as they grapple with issues of power, identity, and conflicting worldviews. Additionally, *Heat and Dust* also explores the theme of assimilation, as some characters attempt to bridge the gap between these two worlds. Chid, a British, being influenced with spiritual thought comes to India. He attended a ceremony in London where some ascetics and a visiting sadhu, who wore clothes of saffron color, from India were gathered to spread a message of 'Universal Love' (*HD* p.22). Characters like Olivia, who marries an Indian prince, and Anne, who seeks to unravel Olivia's story decades later, embody the complexities of cultural assimilation. Their journeys highlight the challenges and sacrifices involved in adapting to a foreign culture while trying to retain one's own identity. In *Heat and Dust*, characters like Olivia and the Nawab navigate what Homi K. Bhabha calls the 'third space,'⁶ where cultures merge and collide (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*). "In essence, *Heat and Dust* is a compelling exploration of cultural clashes and assimilation through the lens of its diverse and intricately developed characters, providing a nuanced understanding of the profound impact of colonialism and cultural exchange in India's history.

2. **Fusion of Cultures:** In the novel, the setting emerges as a character in its own right, skillfully representing the fusion of cultures. The evocative descriptions of the Indian landscape, from the scorching heat of the plains to the lushness of the countryside, mirror the multifaceted nature of the cultural dynamics at play. The setting, like a character, evolves throughout the narrative, serving as a witness to the changing times and the mingling of cultures. It becomes a symbol of both the oppressive colonial history and the vibrant, enigmatic present of India. Through the vivid portrayal of the setting, Jhabvala masterfully underscores the notion that the land itself holds the collective memory of cultural encounters, echoing the complexities of cultural fusion and the enduring impact of the past on the present.

IV. NEW DOMINION - MULTICULTURALISM IN A NEW WORLD

New Dominion by Ruth Praver Jhabvala offers a compelling exploration of the immigrant experience in India, showcasing the complexities, challenges, and transformations that newcomers undergo in a foreign land. The novel is divided into three parts as Delhi, The Holy City and Maupur respectively. This novel, set in India in the mid-20th century, delves into the lives of immigrants who have left their homelands to seek a better future and the ways in which they grapple with issues of identity, belonging, and cultural adaptation. Three girls, Lee, Margaret and Evie, come in India for spiritual bliss and Raymond visits the different parts of India to collect the cultural knowledge from the people. Jhabvala masterfully crafts a diverse ensemble of characters, each representing a different facet of the immigrant experience. From the disillusioned and homesick to the optimistic and resilient, the characters in *New Dominion* reflect the varied emotional landscapes that immigrants navigate as they strive to integrate into Indian society. The novel vividly illustrates the cultural clashes and adjustments immigrants face upon arriving in India. These individuals

must adapt to new customs, languages, and societal norms, often leading to a profound sense of dislocation. Jhabvala delves into the struggles of preserving one's cultural identity while embracing the need to assimilate.

- 1. Economic Hardship:** Economic hardships and the pursuit of economic opportunities are one of the central themes in the novel. Many immigrants, like the character of Miss Charlotte, arrive in India seeking better financial prospects. The story underscores the challenges they encounter in trying to secure employment, provide for their families, and attain the promised Indian dream. *New Dominion* also delves into the quest for a sense of belonging. Immigrants grapple with questions of whether they can truly call India their home and if they can establish meaningful connections with the local population. The tension between preserving their heritage and adopting Indian ways underscores the complexities of identity. As the narrative unfolds, readers witness the process of integration and acculturation among the characters. Some embrace Indian customs wholeheartedly, while others resist the changes, resulting in profound shifts in their personal identities and relationships.

Jhabvala's novel ultimately explores the enduring legacy of the immigrant experience. It highlights the resilience of individuals who, in the face of adversity, carve out new lives and contribute to the cultural fabric of their adopted homeland. Through the lens of *New Dominion*, the reader gains a profound understanding of the immigrant journey and its significance in shaping the multicultural tapestry of India. In *New Dominion*, Jhabvala paints a poignant and authentic portrait of the immigrant experience in India, capturing the hopes, dreams, and tribulations of those who embark on a journey to a new land in search of a brighter future. Through rich characterizations and intricate storytelling, the novel offers a nuanced exploration of the multifaceted immigrant narrative that resonates with readers, evoking empathy and understanding for those who have traversed the challenging path of immigration. In the novel, the characters' struggles and adaptation to a foreign culture are central themes that provide a poignant and insightful exploration of the immigrant experience in India. Through a diverse cast of characters, Jhabvala portrays the challenges, transformations, and resilience of individuals as they navigate the complexities of assimilating into a new culture.

Many characters in *New Dominion* face significant economic hardships upon their arrival in India. They grapple with the need to secure employment and financial stability to support themselves and their families like Margaret and Mrs. Charlotte. Jhabvala vividly depicts the frustration and desperation that can arise from job insecurity, exploitation, and the pressure to succeed in a foreign land. The characters' initial isolation and disorientation in the Indian cultural landscape are palpable. They are confronted with unfamiliar customs, languages, and social norms that often lead to a sense of alienation. The novel illustrates the loneliness and yearning for connections with their native culture, as well as the challenges of forging meaningful relationships with Indians.

- 2. Cultural Identity:** The struggle to preserve one's cultural identity while adapting to a new culture is a central theme in *New Dominion*. Characters like Evie and Lee experience identity crises as they grapple with the tension between their English heritage and their desire to integrate into Indian society. Their personal journeys reflect the complexities of balancing multiple cultural identities. Jhabvala explores generational differences in adaptation. Younger characters often adapt more readily to Indian culture, while older

generations like Mrs. Charlotte may resist change and cling to their traditional ways. Raymond wanders many places in India and studies the real condition of foreigners in the post-colonial era. He is moved by finding them in pathetic condition and tries his best to extend all sorts of help to them. He helps Miss Charlotte in her return journey to England. He feels proud over Miss Charlotte's efforts to maintain the dignity of their homeland for over thirty years. He sends due letters to his mother about Miss Charlotte's efforts for their countrymen. While writing his mother he asserts, "I can't get over the way she's so *English* considering the years she's been out here and the sort of work she's been doing" (ND 77). This generational divide leads to conflicts within families and highlights the evolving nature of cultural identity. As the story unfolds, readers witness the characters' gradual acculturation. Some characters embrace Indian customs, learn the language, and adopt local practices. This process of acculturation is marked by both successes and setbacks, and it leads to personal growth and transformation.

Despite the myriad challenges they face, the characters in *New Dominion* display remarkable resilience and hope. They endure adversity, learn to navigate the complexities of their new environment, and make meaningful contributions to Indian society. Their journeys reflect the enduring human spirit and the capacity for adaptation in the face of adversity. In *New Dominion*, Ruth Praver Jhabvala provides a nuanced and empathetic portrayal of the characters' struggles and adaptation to a foreign culture. Through their diverse experiences, the novel underscores the universal themes of resilience, identity, and the human capacity to confront and overcome challenges. Jhabvala's storytelling invites readers to empathize with the characters' journeys and gain a deeper understanding of the immigrant experience in India, a narrative that resonates with the complexities of multiculturalism in the modern world.

In *New Dominion* by Ruth Praver Jhabvala, the author skillfully portrays cultural identity and displacement as central themes that resonate throughout the narrative. Through her characters and their experiences, Jhabvala offers a nuanced exploration of the complexities of cultural identity and the disorienting effects of displacement in a foreign land. The novel vividly depicts the tension between the characters' native cultures and the Indian culture they encounter. Characters like Lee and Evie grapple with the challenge of preserving their English heritage while attempting to adapt to Indian society. This tension underscores the struggle to maintain a sense of self in the face of cultural assimilation. Jhabvala highlights how cultural identity varies across generations. Younger characters, such as the second-generation immigrants, often navigate their dual identities more fluidly. They may embrace Indian culture while still valuing their cultural heritage. In contrast, older generations may experience a more pronounced clash between their traditional values and the demands of the new culture. The characters frequently experience cultural confusion as they confront the unfamiliar customs, languages, and social norms of India. Their sense of identity becomes fragmented as they try to reconcile their past with their present, resulting in a profound sense of dislocation.

- 3. Displacement:** The characters in *New Dominion* are geographically displaced from their countries of origin. They must adapt to a foreign environment, often marked by harsh weather conditions and unfamiliar landscapes. This geographical displacement contributes to their sense of estrangement and longing for their homelands. Beyond physical displacement, Jhabvala delves into the emotional and psychological effects of

being uprooted from one's homeland. Characters experience a profound sense of loss, homesickness, and nostalgia for their native cultures. The emotional displacement is palpable in their relationships and personal struggles. The novel underscores how displacement can lead to a loss of cultural anchors. Characters may grapple with the erosion of traditional customs, family ties, and a sense of belonging. This loss of cultural roots intensifies their feelings of alienation. Through the lens of cultural identity and displacement, *New Dominion* presents a deeply human narrative that explores the universal themes of belonging, assimilation, and the enduring search for a sense of self. Jhabvala's poignant portrayal of her characters' experiences resonates with anyone who has grappled with questions of identity and the challenges of adapting to a new cultural milieu. The novel serves as a compelling exploration of the immigrant experience and the enduring impact of displacement on the human psyche.

V. NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES AND MULTICULTURALISM

Ruth Praver Jhabvala's narrative techniques in her works, including *Heat and Dust* and *New Dominion*, are instrumental in conveying multicultural themes with depth and nuance. Her literary craftsmanship, characterized by perspective shifts and the skillful use of language, enriches the exploration of cultural diversity and the complexities of multiculturalism in her novels. Jhabvala often employs multiple narrators or alternating points of view within her novels. This technique allows readers to gain insights into the same events or characters from different cultural and personal perspectives. In *Heat and Dust*, for instance, the dual narrative structure contrasts the British colonial past with contemporary India, offering distinct lenses through which to view cultural change and adaptation. Jhabvala utilizes temporal shifts to bridge different time periods. This enables readers to witness the evolution of cultural norms and attitudes over time. In *Heat and Dust*, the juxtaposition of past and present allows for a nuanced exploration of how cultures intersect and transform across generations. By shifting perspectives between characters from diverse cultural backgrounds, Transnationalism, to a great degree of similarity, may be analogically assimilated with the current trend of globalization which stands for the “intensification of economic, cultural, and political practices accelerating across the globe.”⁷ (Huff) Jhabvala highlights cultural contrasts and misunderstandings. This narrative technique underscores the clash of worldviews and values, revealing the challenges and opportunities inherent in multicultural encounters.

Jhabvala incorporates bilingual or multilingual dialogue into her narratives, reflecting the linguistic diversity of her characters' worlds. This linguistic richness serves as a powerful tool for conveying the intricacies of multicultural communication and the fusion of languages. Jhabvala uses symbolic language to represent cultural nuances and symbolism. Metaphors, idioms, and symbolism drawn from different cultures enrich the narrative, providing readers with a deeper understanding of cultural motifs and their significance. Characters in Jhabvala's novels often engage in code-switching, moving seamlessly between languages or dialects based on the context of their interactions. This linguistic fluidity captures the essence of multiculturalism and the adaptability required in navigating different cultural settings. Jhabvala's narrative techniques are a testament to her storytelling prowess, enabling readers to immerse themselves in the complexities of multiculturalism. By shifting perspectives and deftly employing language, she fosters empathy for characters from diverse backgrounds, encourages readers to question cultural norms, and ultimately delivers a more

profound exploration of the multifaceted nature of human interactions in a multicultural world. Jhabvala's narratives serve as a literary mirror reflecting the intricate tapestry of cultures and the evolving dynamics between them.

VI. COMPARISON OF THE NARRATIVE STYLES EMPLOYED IN HEAT AND DUST AND NEW DOMINION

Ruth Praver Jhabvala, a master of narrative storytelling, employs distinct narrative styles in her novels *Heat and Dust* and *New Dominion*. While both novels explore multicultural themes, they differ in their approaches to storytelling and narrative techniques.

1. Heat and Dust

- **Dual Narrative Structure:** *Heat and Dust* is characterized by a dual narrative structure that alternates between two time periods. One narrative strand is set in the British colonial past, while the other unfolds in contemporary India. This narrative technique allows for a parallel exploration of cultural dynamics, offering contrasting perspectives on the same geographical and cultural landscape.
- **First-Person Narration:** The novel often employs first-person narration, particularly in the contemporary storyline. This technique gives the reader intimate access to the thoughts and experiences of Olivia, an Englishwoman exploring India, and the unnamed narrator in contemporary India. These narrators offer deeply personal insights into their journeys of cultural discovery and self-discovery.
- **Diary Entries and Letters:** Jhabvala incorporates diary entries and letters as narrative devices. Olivia's diary, discovered by the contemporary narrator, provides glimpses into the colonial past, offering a historical perspective on cultural interactions. These documents serve as a form of storytelling within the story, enhancing the novel's depth and complexity.

2. New Dominion:

- **Third-Person Limited Perspective:** *New Dominion* predominantly employs a third-person limited perspective. This narrative style allows readers to observe the characters from an external vantage point while delving into the thoughts and emotions of specific characters, such as Lee and Evie. This perspective provides a more objective view of the characters' experiences.
- **Linear Narrative:** Unlike the non-linear narrative structure of *Heat and Dust*, *New Dominion* follows a more linear narrative trajectory. The story unfolds chronologically, tracing the characters' experiences as they adapt to life in India. This straightforward approach emphasizes the gradual evolution of cultural identity and assimilation.
- **Character-Centric Storytelling:** *New Dominion* places a strong emphasis on character development and interpersonal relationships. The narrative style centers on the characters' struggles, aspirations, and relationships as they navigate the challenges of immigration and cultural adaptation. The novel delves deeply into the inner lives of the characters. While *Heat and Dust* employs a dual narrative structure, first-person narration, and the use of historical documents, *New Dominion* adopts a third-person

limited perspective, linear narrative, and character-centric storytelling. These narrative styles are tailored to the specific themes and contexts of each novel, offering readers distinct experiences in exploring multiculturalism, cultural identity, and the immigrant experience. Jhabvala's versatility as a writer shines through in her ability to adapt her narrative techniques to suit the unique storytelling requirements of each work.

VII. GENDER AND MULTICULTURALISM

Ruth Praver Jhabvala's novels, such as *Heat and Dust* and *New Dominion*, provide a thought-provoking examination of how gender roles and expectations intersect with multiculturalism, shedding light on the complex ways in which culture, tradition, and societal norms shape the experiences of individuals, particularly women, in multicultural contexts.

In *Heat and Dust*, the novel explores the rigid gender roles and expectations prevalent during the British colonial period in India. British women, like Olivia, often faced limitations on their agency and independence, constrained by societal norms of modesty and propriety. The clash between these colonial gender roles and the more fluid roles of Indian women becomes evident as characters interact. The novel contrasts British and Indian cultural norms regarding gender. V. A. Sahane finds it as “sordid tale of amorous adventures.”⁸ The character of the Nawab represents traditional Indian patriarchy, while characters like the Begum and Chid contrast these norms by asserting a degree of independence and influence within their cultural context. Olivia visits the shrine in the company of Nawab after being enticed by him. Being influenced with the isolated atmosphere, she gets attracted towards Nawab and he takes the advantage of present situation, consequently she becomes pregnant. He makes a joke on the incident: “It is the secret of the Husband’s Wedding Day” (*HD* p. 137). The intersection of British and Indian cultures in the novel underscores how gender roles are both influenced by and influence multicultural dynamics. Olivia's attempt to assimilate into Indian society leads to a reevaluation of her own identity and gender role, highlighting the transformative power of cultural exchange.

New Dominion delves into the immigrant experience in India, where characters grapple with adapting to a new culture while preserving their cultural identities. Gender roles within immigrant families are often shaped by the clash between traditional values from their countries of origin and the more egalitarian expectations in India. The novel explores generational differences in gender roles and expectations. Younger generations may adopt more progressive views on gender equality, while older generations may adhere more closely to traditional roles. This generational divide often leads to conflicts and tensions within immigrant families. Rekha Jha rightly says, “The European find physical dangers like pollution, unhygienic conditions, dirty streets, heat and dust all around and these seem to bear down.”⁹ Female characters like Lee and Evie navigate the tension between cultural expectations and personal aspirations. Lee's pursuit of spiritualism in Swamiji's ashram and desire for independence reflect the changing roles and opportunities available to immigrant women in India. The novel portrays both the empowerment and challenges faced by these women as they navigate multiculturalism.

In both *Heat and Dust* and *New Dominion*, Jhabvala's narratives highlight the intricate interplay between gender roles, cultural expectations, and the multicultural contexts in which her characters find themselves. Her novels underscore how gender identities and experiences are shaped, challenged, and transformed by the collision and convergence of different cultures. Through her storytelling, Jhabvala prompts readers to contemplate the ways in which multiculturalism can both reinforce and challenge established gender norms, offering a nuanced perspective on the complex relationship between culture, identity, and gender.

VIII. ANALYSIS OF FEMALE CHARACTERS' AGENCY AND THEIR ROLES AS MEDIATORS BETWEEN CULTURES

Ruth Praver Jhabvala's novels, such as *Heat and Dust* and *New Dominion*, offer a compelling analysis of female characters who exhibit agency and serve as mediators between cultures. These characters play pivotal roles in bridging cultural divides, challenging traditional norms, and facilitating cultural exchange. Their agency reflects the complex dynamics of multiculturalism and the evolving roles of women in these contexts.

1. Heat and Dust

- **Olivia:** Olivia, the central character in the British colonial narrative, embodies the transformative potential of female agency. Her journey from England to India marks her as an agent of change. As she immerses herself in Indian culture and pursues a forbidden relationship, she becomes a bridge between the British colonial world and the vibrant Indian society. Nirmal Mukherjee is right when she says, "The most serious drawback of *Heat and Dust* seems to me to be the author's inability to explore the inner life of her protagonist. We cannot identify ourselves with them; or we feel emotionally involved in their predicaments and conflicts."¹⁰ Her agency challenges conventional gender roles and disrupts cultural norms, ultimately contributing to the novel's exploration of multiculturalism.
- **The Begum:** The character of the Begum, a powerful Indian matriarch, represents another facet of female agency. She navigates the complex world of Indian traditions and politics, wielding significant influence within her cultural context. Her role as a mediator between British and Indian cultures is pivotal in shaping the narrative's exploration of multiculturalism.

2. New Dominion

- **Margaret:** Margaret, a young Indian immigrant in India, embodies female agency in the immigrant experience. Her pursuit of education, desire for independence, and defiance of traditional gender roles challenge cultural expectations. Margaret serves as a bridge between her English heritage and the Indian society she encounters, actively contributing to the multicultural exchange within the narrative.
- **Lee:** In the contemporary narrative of *New Dominion*, Lee serves as an outsider who seeks to unravel the immigrant experience and learn spiritualism in India from Swamiji. Her interactions with characters like Asha and Gopi provide a perspective on multiculturalism from a non-immigrant viewpoint. Lee's agency lies in her

curiosity and empathy, making her a mediator between cultures as she seeks to understand the experiences of the characters.

In both novels, these female characters' agency goes beyond individual empowerment; it becomes a mechanism for cross-cultural dialogue and transformation. Their roles as mediators between cultures highlight the potential for individuals, particularly women, to challenge and reshape cultural norms, foster understanding, and facilitate cultural exchange. Through the lens of these characters, Jhabvala underscores the significance of women as active participants in multicultural contexts, offering a nuanced exploration of the intricate dynamics of identity, culture, and gender.

IX. LEGACY OF RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA'S MULTICULTURALISM

Ruth Praver Jhabvala's exploration of multiculturalism in her novels, such as *Heat and Dust* and *New Dominion*, continues to be relevant and insightful in today's globalized world. Her narratives offer enduring lessons and perspectives on the complexities of multiculturalism that resonate with contemporary discussions and challenges:

- 1. Cultural Exchange and Hybrid Identities:** Jhabvala's novels highlight the fluid nature of cultural identities and the dynamic interplay between different cultures. In today's globalized world, where people and ideas move across borders with greater ease, the notion of hybrid identities and cultural exchange remains highly relevant. Jhabvala's work reminds us that multiculturalism isn't about preserving static, homogenous cultures but about embracing diversity and adapting to evolving cultural landscapes. The characters in Jhabvala's novels often grapple with cultural clashes and misunderstandings, reflecting the challenges of multicultural interactions. In the contemporary world, where diverse cultures intersect in everyday life, her exploration of the complexities of navigating these clashes offers valuable insights. Her stories encourage empathy, patience, and open dialogue as essential tools for addressing cultural differences.
- 2. Identity and Belonging:** The quest for identity and a sense of belonging is a recurring theme in Jhabvala's work. In an era marked by mobility and migration, the questions of where one belongs and how one defines their identity are pertinent. Jhabvala's characters' journeys of self-discovery and adaptation resonate with individuals who straddle multiple cultural worlds, making her work relatable to those navigating similar challenges today.
- 3. Gender and Multiculturalism:** Jhabvala's exploration of how gender roles intersect with multiculturalism remains relevant in contemporary discussions on gender equality and diversity. Her portrayal of female characters who challenge cultural norms and expectations serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for gender equity in multicultural contexts.
- 4. Legacy of Colonialism:** Jhabvala's examination of the enduring impact of colonialism on cultural identities and power dynamics is especially relevant as societies continue to grapple with the legacies of colonial history. Her novels shed light on the complexities of post-colonial identity and the interplay between past and present in multicultural societies.

X. INFLUENCE OF HER WORK OVER CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE AND DISCUSSIONS ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Ruth Praver Jhabvala's work has had a significant influence on contemporary literature and discussions on cultural diversity, leaving a lasting legacy that continues to resonate with readers, scholars, and writers alike. Here's an exploration of her impact:

- 1. Multicultural Narratives:** Jhabvala's novels, with their intricate exploration of multiculturalism, have paved the way for a broader acceptance and celebration of multicultural narratives in contemporary literature. Her work has encouraged authors to delve into the complexities of cultural diversity, transcending borders to create stories that reflect the richness of global perspectives.
- 2. Nuanced Portrayal of Identity:** Jhabvala's nuanced portrayal of identity and cultural dynamics has influenced contemporary writers to create multi-dimensional characters who grapple with issues of cultural identity, belonging, and displacement. Her characters serve as models for authors seeking to delve deep into the psyches of individuals navigating multiple cultural worlds.
- 3. Cross-Cultural Relationships:** Jhabvala's exploration of cross-cultural relationships, whether romantic or familial, has sparked conversations in contemporary literature about the challenges and rewards of such relationships. Her novels have influenced writers to delve into the complexities of love, friendship, and family ties across cultural boundaries.
- 4. Feminist Perspective:** Jhabvala's examination of gender roles and expectations within multicultural contexts has contributed to contemporary feminist literature and discussions. Her portrayal of female characters who challenge cultural norms has resonated with writers exploring themes of gender equality and empowerment within diverse cultural settings.
- 5. Post-Colonial Literature:** Jhabvala's insights into the enduring legacies of colonialism on cultural identities and power dynamics have made her work relevant to discussions in post-colonial literature. Contemporary authors often draw from her exploration of these themes to illuminate the complexities of post-colonial societies.
- 6. Dialogue on Cultural Exchange:** Jhabvala's narratives have stimulated discussions on the benefits and challenges of cultural exchange in today's interconnected world. Her stories encourage readers to engage in dialogues about cultural diversity, tolerance, and understanding.
- 7. Literary Awards and Recognition:** Jhabvala's numerous accolades, including the Man Booker Prize and Academy Awards for her screenwriting, have drawn attention to her work and its impact on literature and cinema. Her success has inspired aspiring writers to tackle multicultural themes in their own work.

In conclusion, Ruth Praver Jhabvala's literary contributions have left an indelible mark on contemporary literature and discussions on cultural diversity. Her ability to craft intricate narratives that explore the intricacies of multiculturalism, identity, and human

relationships has inspired a new generation of writers to embrace these themes in their own storytelling. Her work continues to serve as a source of inspiration and a catalyst for meaningful conversations about the complex tapestry of cultures in our increasingly globalized world.

XI. CONCLUSION

This chapter offers an immersive journey through the multicultural landscapes depicted in Ruth Praver Jhabvala's novels, *Heat and Dust* and *New Dominion*. By analyzing the characters, settings, and narrative techniques employed by Jhabvala, we gain a deeper understanding of the complexities and enduring significance of multiculturalism as portrayed in her literary works. Jhabvala's legacy as a writer who intricately wove together diverse cultural threads continues to resonate in contemporary discussions on multiculturalism and identity.

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