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## Expatriate Women in The Fiction of Ruth Praver Jhabvala

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### ABSTRACT

*Ruth Praver Jhabvala born on 7th May 1927 to a polish parents in Germany came to England with her family in 1939. Educated in England*

*Ruth Praver Jhabvala is often described as an "inside outsider" and "outside insider" Heat and Dust and Three Continents. She won the Booker Award for her novel Heat and Dust for the year 1975. ; To Whom She Will, Esmond in India, A Backward Place, A Backward Place are some of her other novels.*

*Ruth Praver Jhabvala mirrors the social back-ground of India in her works. Jhabvala's technique is delineating the picture of the poor plight of poverty of the country. In this respect she has assumed a universal place and position.*

*The major themes in Jhabvala's fiction are East West Encounter and marital dissonance. It has social, cultural and spiritual dimensions.*

### Keywords : Expatriate Women of Jhabvala

#### Comparison with contemporary writers

The two women contemporary writers Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Praver Jhabvala are expatriates. The former, an Indian by birth married an English man and the latter, who is of European origin, married an Indian. Thus, both of them chose to live in a country which is not their own. Again both of them are placed at a vantage point which gives them the committed involvement and also the necessary distance to bring in the expatriate experience into their fictional focus.

#### Jhabvala as Inside outsider and Outside insider

Ruth Praver Jhabvala is often described as an "inside outsider" and "outside insider". Jhabvala came to India at the age of twenty-four as the young bride of a Parsi architect. Her creative urge found its artistic expression during her long stay in India. She stayed in India for more than twenty years. In her novels she repeatedly discusses the theme of interaction between the two cultures, namely European and Indian.

Jhabvala's pre occupation with India confers on her a distinguished position in the world of Indian-English literature. She remarkably deals with the problems of the expatriates, their psychological turmoil and cultural schizophrenia with insight and understanding. She has written novels like Esmond In India, A Backward Place, Heat and Dust and Three Continents. She won the Booker Award for her novel Heat and Dust for the year 1975.

Most of her writings deal with the various shades of Indianness, apart from many other things. But she isn't happy to be termed herself as an 'Indian'. She said that she is not at all an Indian author but 'as one of those European writers who have written about India.'

#### Jhabvala's Novels

Her first novel; To Whom She Will presents a very beautiful picture on Indian society –its rites and customs, taste and temperament and above all, marriage and love with an element of illicit relationships. The nature of Passion deals with a modern young girl, Nimmi, who wants to discard the ago-old customs and rites, myths and tradition. She fights for the cause of woman's emancipation. She attends club regularly, plays tennis, keeps bobcut hair, and attends lectures on English Romantic poets. But on the other hand, her community is dead against all her western activities. Through

Nimmi, the novelist wants to satirize these silly youngsters who have false pretensions to modernism and independence. They should always bear in their mind that their sentiments, emancipations, individuality, anti-traditional responses, mental processes are conditioned by a social structure of parental affection.

Both Esmond in India and a Backward Place ring the note of east-west encounter. Esmond in India tells the story of Esmond Stillwood, an Englishman, Who marries Gulab, the beautiful Indian girl. But the marriage fails due to the different nature in both the character Esmond is selfish and mean. Gulab is rough and unsophisticated.

In A Backward Place, Juddy, an English girl, marries an Indian actor Bal. But this marriage also does not succeed because of their different mentality.

The Householder is a domestic comedy which shows Jhabvala's acute perception of remote village life, the conflicts between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law- the one with domineering accusations and the other with taciturn enmity. The novel revolves round the life of Prem, a sensitive young man and a teacher who is absolutely surprised by the strange city and also by an early marriage.

R.P.Jhabvala's Heat and Dust won her the prestigious Booker Prize in 1975. It deals with the sad and moving story of two English women who paid their visit to India and in return they became the victims of this country. The narrative technique of the novel is equally important. It moves backward and forward from 1923 to the present with ease and felicity. It reminds of The God Small Things, a novel by Arundhati Roy. The narrator of the novel is unnamed up to the end.

Nissim Ezekiel in his famous article "Distorting Mirror" views that Jhabvala has made the country stranger in her imagination overheated by hatred. As a matter of fact, if we judge her works, we come to the conclusion that her early works are richly devoted to India and she can be seen loving this country. But latter on, she becomes blunt and cold to this strange land. She observes:

"I suppose it could be put down to my change of attitude towards India. I lived every thing during my first years here-

really loved it and was wildly excited by it and never wanted to go away from here. But later that changed. I saw a lot I didn't like. I'll go further: a lot that horrified me."

### Social background in Jhabvala's Novels

While Ruth Praver Jhabvala mirrors the social background of India in her works. She has achieved an international reputation as the most popular novelist of social and economic problems of the present century.

As a novelist of passion, she emerges as a social realist, a prophet and a crusader of evils in her novels and stories right from her first novel *To Whom She Will* (1955). Her idea of cosmopolitan humanism is so compact and comprehensive that it embraces the entire gamut of human experience. Thus all her novels are the novels of social realism, responsibility, involvement and creative tension and its resolution.

Her love for India as a past glory is not a romantic aspiration of the novelist but it is basically the result of an expatriate's understanding and familiarity with the Indian traditions and culture. India is presented and portrayed as a country passing through the criss-cross of the conflicts between tradition and modernity.

### Description about India through Jhabvala's vision

Thus, disillusionment, disappointment or distress and death are the inevitable dark harvest of Jhabvala's characters like Child and his companions, Lee and Margaret.

C. Paul Verghese also holds the same view when he says that Jhabvala depicts this picture of fake Sadhus simply because it.

"enables her to attempt a satirical portrait of India and ridicule the Pseudo-idealism and pseudo-romanticism of Indians and the westerners who are in love with India and come to India seeking spiritual solace."3(33)

### The technique of Jhabvala's style

The technique of Jhabvala's style in delineating the picture of the poor plight of poverty is writ large on the face of the country. She lacks the sentimental and emotional approach of Kamala Markandaya or Mulk Raj Anand. Some description such as 'monkey taking lice out of a man's hair', children look in the gutters to find what has been thrown away are grim, aggregated and far removed from reality. Here the truth presented is half-naked and therefore pleasing to the mind of the reader.

Jhabvala has stated here with a small canvas or what is true of Jane Austen's two inches ivory in each novel. She had made no attempt to understand the village life which, in her own words reflects the very soul of India.

Jhabvala's creative work has no philosophical concerns and concept which alone push literature to the level of higher significance. In the words of Mathew Arnold, it may be said that her work lacks high seriousness, or she fails to apply the touchstone method in her novels.

Varghese also feels that Jhabvala's "understanding of India is not deep and she just skims over the surface of the Urban life India"10(33).

The art of Jhabvala as a novelist and her achievements as a problem novelist are distinctive. In this respect she has assumed a universal place and position. "This awareness of a group of people, their culture and tradition has to be harmonized with the consciousness of the universal man that is at the centre of the art of fiction. V.A. Shahane, (198).

As Jhabvala tends unconsciously to identify herself more and more with India... it seems likely that her comprehensive world will picture more bushes which not merely flourish but also burn and this synthesis of talent and technique will, in future, unfold the great artist in all her true glory.

### Jhabvala's Merit

Jhabvala's merit as a creative writer lies in her being intensely aware of her limitations. Her art of fiction pursues the path of the comic and evolves the form of a social comedy of manners. George Heredith says that comedy depicts men and women in Society, that the setting of comedy is primarily urban, and that the comic writer presents a social and cultural outlook with a view to measuring man's behaviour against an accepted norm.

Jhabvala excels in presenting incongruities of human character and situations. These incongruities have social, familial and cultural implications and consequently they become the source of the comic. In *The Nature of Passion* Nimmi speaks of her College and the lecture of Keat's poetry makes fun of the whole business of girls going to college.

Jhabvala is much preoccupied with portraying the predicament of individuals in their relationship to the family, to the social group, in a way which demonstrates her Indianness.

Jhabvala seems to Khushwant Singh very Indian, and he calls her the 'adopted daughter of India'. Since she is concerned with a money-civilization, in its domestic setting, she seeks to present the material reality which is significant in the metaphysics of her art. However, this metaphysics in her cosmos has also a spiritual dimension partly revealed in the charm that Europeans feel about the gurus, the inheritors of Indian's spiritual glory. In this way Jhabvala's quest for the material reality is supplemented by, and harmonized with, her search for a spiritual reality.

### Conclusion

The major themes in Jhabvala's fiction are 'East West Encounter' and marital dissonance' which are mutually interlinked in their negative context. The theme of East-west encounter in Jhabvala's fiction has social, cultural and spiritual dimensions. In the social context. Indians and Europeans meet fall in love, get married, and face either mutual dissonance or familial friction. In the socio-economic themes, it is the poor, the unemployed, the 'jobless', the down-trodden who suffer most and fail to find out to make their both ends meet. Here the novelist does not prescribe any remedy to redress this socio economic melody. Most of the characters presented by her are the middle-class people who wander between two worlds-one of so-called unfulfillment materially, mentally, and spiritually and other of fulfillment just barely by taking their two-time meal.

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