



## Ruth Praver Jhabvala as an Indian Writer

### KEYWORDS

**P.Saranyadevi**

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Kongu Engineering College, Perundurai, Pincode: 638052

**D.Ramya**

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Kongu Engineering College, Perundurai, Pincode: 638052

**ABSTRACT** *Ruth Praver Jhabvala being an Anglo – Indian novelists, picked up the threads of Anglo- Indian fiction with a new perspective and found a unique place among the Anglo – Indian novelists. She is essentially a European writer who lived for sometime in India and expressed through her words, the experience of Indian life and society. Jhabvala’s fiction is concerned with Indian theme and obsession. Her awareness of various aspects of Indian life establishes the Indianness of her fiction. Living in Delhi in the years after independence, Jhabvala has had opportunities of exercising her powers of close observation on the milieu that changes chameleon – like from local to cosmopolitan, from traditional to conventional, from native to sophisticated. Jhabvala has her own style and technique to portray the predicament of individuals in their relationship with their families. She stands apart from the subject, sees the character and events as a whole, as a part of the consistent pattern she has drawn; and her concern is to see how art can arrange and re- arrange the shifting events of Indian life. Jhabvala has prying eye for the problems like the east- western counter, westernization, education, sex and marriage exploitation and democracy which are common in Indian society. Her characters travel in the quest of better knowledge of their own minds and hearts although they journey through an Indian landscape. Jhabvala uses the novel as a powerful medium for presenting the problems of the Indian society and suggesting ways and means to solve the problems.*

The novel, of all the forms of literature is perhaps the most faithful, convincing and effective vehicle of a nation’s ethos. The novel is the most potent, pliable and popular means of communicating a creative experience, evoking touching sentiments and profound thought in and about human life. A novelist can portray the life of a nation more authentically, convincingly and artistically than a poet and a dramatist can. The Indian novel in English, therefore can do greater justice to Indian life and society than the western novel, dealing with India can do. The present century in its early thirties witnesses two types of novelists writing in English. They have been classified as the Indo – Anglian novelist and the Anglo – Indian novelist.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala has been established as an Anglo-Indian novelist by the modern critics. She picked up the threads of Anglo-Indian fiction, with an entirely new perspective. Jhabvala has a unique place among the Anglo-Indian novelists of Post-Independence era. The question is why she is so different from other Anglo-Indian novelists. The answer is so obvious. She came to India when British Raj was no more. Indian struggle for freedom was over but it faced with many other problems came with freedom. Jhabavala naturally got involved with these problems and wrote about them, humorously, ironically, critically and even bitterly.

She is essentially a European writer who lived for sometime in India and expressed through her words the experiences of Indian life and society. Her position as a novelist who writes about India is unique. Whether she writes as an outsider or as an insider is not important, the most important point is her awareness of man, society, human and moral dilemmas and the aesthetic design that she projects in her novels. Whatever Jhabavala’s relationship with India and Europe may be, as far as her fiction is concerned, India seems to be her theme and obsession. Her awareness of various aspects of Indian life establishes the Indianness

of her fiction. Her close personal experience of Indian life and her exclusive interest in it as a novelist as well as her ability to identify very closely with Indians, notably with Indian women, takes her nearer to native writers like R. K. Naryanan and Raja Rao.

Jhabvala writes everything in its minutest details, which makes her novels occasionally dull for the Indian but enchants her European readers. In other words, she basically wrote for westerners and not for Indians. Jhabvala herself admits, “When one writes about India as a European and as English (as I do), inevitably one writes not for Indian but Western readers”. Her western readers naturally are not familiar with Indian landscape, life and culture, and hence Jhabvala is obliged to paint a large and comprehensive canvas and this often leads to exaggerated portrayals in her novels, and perhaps this is the basic reason of her novels being most popular in the west than in India.

Jhabavala’s early years in India were very different from those an English woman would normally have expected. She met few Europeans and lived a reasonably typical middle-class Indian life. Her early impressions, then, where full of sensuous beauty she saw all around her in the country which she described as a paradise on earth. Jhabavala having married to an Indian Parsee architect, lived in Delhi in the years after Independence. Jhabavala has had opportunities of exercising her powers of close observation on the milieu that changes chameleon- like from local to cosmopolitan, from traditional to conventional, from native to sophisticated. During her stay, in India she assimilated all the Indian experiences in terms of Indian customs, Indian culture, Indian languages, Indian food habits, Indian joint family system, Indian dresses and Indian dishes.

Jhabavala’s merit as a creative writer lies in her being intensely aware of her limitations. She writes about only that urban section of modern India which she knows well,

namely the middle-class Indian society. She writes about the lower middle-class with understanding and touches the more affluent classes only here and there. Jhabvala established herself as a great personality of India in the field of fiction. Although she has left India many years ago, she shines bright on the surface of Indian fiction. She has experienced both love and hate relationship with India. She loved everything she saw the smells and sights and sounds of India, the mango and jasmine on hot nights, the rich spiced food, the vast sky, the sight of dawn and dusk, the birds flying about, the ruins and the music. The beggars and the poverty did not bother her but gave her delight and a subject to write. She considered them as a part of life.

As a women writer with her sensitive perception of the human relationship, Jhabvala handles the situation from the perspective of the relationship between man and woman in and out of marriage, which is most intimate and hence most complex. The problems of the expatriates, their psychological turmoil and cultural schizophrenia are dealt with insight and understanding.

Jhabvala has her own style and technique to portray the predicament of individuals in their relationship with their families. The East-West encounter between the boss and servant, but on an equal level and she gives in her fiction the experiences of European women married to Indians and of Indian women married to Europeans who are confronted with the inevitable situation of the Hindu joint families. Their differences have been presented with considerable power and acute sense of understanding. The interaction between two cultures, European and Indian, seems to be her forte.

Mostly her settings are in and around Delhi. She is interested in certain types of character and in certain modes of behavior: her province as a writer is contemporary India, and the problems which arouse her curiosity as a novelist are largely personal and domestic. She sets her artistic shaping imagination to work on the everyday eschewing violence, wildness and romanticism.

Jhabvala's novelistic concern is with the difficulties of young married couples either within or recently escaped from the cocoon of the joint family, with the problem of the so-called backwardness in India, and with a set of conflicts generating considerable emotional heat: the conflicts between traditional Hinduism and modern western ideas; the conflicts within Indian society of spiritual and material aspirations, the more Universal conflicts of children and parents, husband and wife.

All sympathy and not anger dominate Jhabvala's treatment. She stands apart from the subject, sees the characters and events as a whole, as part of the consistent pattern she has drawn; and her concern is to see how art can arrange and re-arrange the shifting events of Indian life.

Mrs. Jhabvala's success as a novelist of Indian social life may be partly the result of her being originally a European outsider. Her knowledge of India is considerable, but while regarding herself as Indian by adoption, she has skillfully utilized the distance and objectivity provided by her original foreignness. This dual nationality of her, enables her to treat Indian customs and traditions with the sense of tactful comedy. Since she has chosen India, she can afford to be critical and satirical without offence. She can steer mercifully clear of political and religious controversy.

Though Jhabvala, during her stay of three decades in this country, wrote about India, as a European and for the Europeans, yet, she has a place of her own contribution to Anglo-Indian fiction which would always remain incomparable and unique. The Indian image that she projected in her novels, will always be remembered by her readers. Her deep understanding, keen observation, and deep insight into this unknown society make her a novelist worthy of careful study and analysis. Jhabvala works are like a screen on which the readers can see thirty years of post-independence India projected in many of its hues and colors.