‘Style mirrors the writer’s personality’. This is truly justified of both the novelists, Jane Austen and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. The technique which they employ in their novels, proves perfectly their understanding of human nature and a tremendous sense of humour they both have. Undoubtedly, this has been achieved by the remarkable use of irony through various types of technical devices. However, Jhabvala’s bitter experiences of Eastern life as perceived through her European sensibility colour her irony which in her later novels assumes a sharp satiric vision. Still, both the novelists resemble each other in their keen observation of simple human follies, foibles and absurdities which they depict through variegated ironic colours on their canvasses. These colours spring from various technical devices. Some of these devices are: the narrative style with ironic statement; witty dialogues, the ironic plot construction or the ironic form and structure of the novel, juxtaposition of characters and situations; dramatic reversal of events and situations and so on.

The present chapter deals with such technical devices used by the two novelists with special reference to their contemporary society. As irony arising out of juxtaposition of characters has already been discussed in the preceding chapter, this chapter will mainly deal with the narrator’s ironic commentary, the characters’ actions and interactions through dialogues and gestures and finally the dramatic ironic reversals of events and situations. Broadly these different devices, as applied by both ironists in their novels, can be categorized under two heads — verbal irony and situational (or dramatic) irony.
IRONY THROUGH VARIOUS DEVICES IN JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS

Jane Austen's power to speak clearly to our generation, and to readers in any English-speaking society, springs from our admiration of her deft use of language, from the alertness and uncertainty that it awakes in us, ... and from our acknowledgment of the relevance and fidelity of her ironic vision to life as we know it to be in our own world.¹

This remark by Yasmine Gooneratne sums up the entire ironic vision of Jane Austen. Her epigrammatic style and specific language along with her moral principles direct her towards her forte – irony. Undoubtedly her ironic vision is mostly comic. C.S. Lewis studies the relation between her morality and comic vision which is the very foundation of all her technical devices giving rise to an omniscient irony:

The hardcore morality and even of religion seems to me to be just what makes good comedy possible. "Principles" or "seriousness" are essential to Jane Austen's art. Where there is no norm, nothing can be ridiculous, except for a brief moment of unbalanced provincialism in which we may laugh at the merely unfamiliar. Unless there is something about which the author is never ironical there can be no true irony in the work. "Total irony" – irony about everything – frustrates itself and becomes insipid.²

In Jane Austen’s novels these principles are the Christian values of 18th century English society which must be balanced in a person. And a slight deviation from it makes her laugh at them attacking them with her ironical shafts or mild satire. However, these deviations largely rest on only some oddities, incongruities, ignorance or sometimes comic fools. There are very few characters who suffer from some serious moral flaw. It is the ridiculous, incongruous or ludicrous, which attract Jane Austen’s attention at once. These oddities cannot escape the author's keen eye. This is pointed out in a review of Emma in an article titled The Champion:

Our authoress possesses a peculiar felicity in measuring a character – and has a nice eye and a facile pen for arresting and embodying oddities – as species of light satire for which the delicate tact of female minds is admirably adapted.³
This minute observation of human nature and human behaviour with all its admiring or ridiculous aspects is delineated mainly through verbal and dramatic irony. R.E. Hughes in his article on *The Education of Emma Woodhouse* also finds the presence of these two ironies. Apart from the microscopic view of her work, the microcosmic view also "emphasizes the irony of Jane Austen, but it sees the irony as dramatic as well as verbal, relying on the reader's discovery of an equivalence between the data of the novel and the data of his own world;..."

The first three sections of the present chapter deal with irony arising out of the novelist's ironic commentary, witty ironic dialogues and finally contrastive results of various actions and interactions at the end of the novels.

### III

**IRONY THROUGH NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE**

Jane Austen is a perfectionist as far as her narrative technique is concerned. The most remarkable feature of her narrative technique is her ironic mode of commentary which allows her to speak freely on the incongruities or affectation of people maintaining a proper distance from her characters. The basic intention of her ironic commentary is, of course, to create humour rather than to reform people. Prof. Wright remarks:

Jane Austen likewise often uses irony as a stylistic device and for quite un-ironic purposes — to flay, to poke fun,...

Definitely, this could not be possible without having a sound command over language which is more often rhetoric, ambiguous or full of understatements. The term 'irony' is mostly defined as "the stylistic technique of reversal, or at least transformation, of literal meaning." Such types of ironic statements are the very source of the popularity of her novels.

Jane Austen's ironic trifles are majorly aimed at the false notions or illusory thinking of her heroines. Catherine Morland, Emma, Marianne or Elizabeth Bennet are those butts of her ironic commentary which are sometimes coloured with satiric hue.
Catherine Morland, for example, is described in the most humorous mode through an ironic language. To ridicule the gothic tradition in novel Jane Austen ironically introduces her as an anti-gothic heroine in the very commencing lines of Northanger Abbey:

NO ONE WHO HAD EVER seen Catherine Morland in her infancy, would have supposed her born to be heroine. ... She had a thin awkward figure, ... she had no taste for a garden; ... She learnt [music] a year, and could not bear it;—... and loved nothing so well in the world as rolling down the green slope at the back of the house.

Jane Austen further continues:

Her greatest deficiency was in the pencil—she had no notion of drawing—not enough even to attempt a sketch of her lover’s profile, that she might be detected in the design (p. 682).

Such an amusing description of the heroine is indeed a mock heroic burlesque of the gothic sentimental novels which Jane Austen actually intends to satirize. In fact, the entire novel is steeped in such amusing comments of the narrator. The necessity of the hero is again mocked at by the author to satirize the contemporary fashion in writing, when she writes:

She had reached the age of seventeen, without having seen one amiable youth who could call forth her sensibility;... This was strange indeed! But strange things may be generally accounted for if their cause be fairly searched out. There was not one lord in the neighbourhood;... not one family... who had reared and supported a boy accidentally found at their door—not one young man whose origin was unknown.— Her father had no ward, and the squire of the parish no children. But when a young lady is to be a heroine, the perverseness of forty surrounding families cannot prevent her. Something must and will happen to throw a hero in her way (pp. 682-683).

This is how the necessity of a hero is satirized by Jane Austen in a true mock-heroic style through her ironic language. Nonetheless, the basic source of her ironic mode comes across vividly when she describes Catherine’s illusion of confusing life with literature. The novelist writes amusingly when Catherine is trying hard to find something sensational in the Abbey on getting the roll of papers in the cabinet. Jane Austen describes her situation amusingly:
...her feelings at that moment were indescribable. Her heart fluttered, her knees trembled, and her cheeks grew pale (p. 800).

And after waiting quite impatiently for the whole night, when in the morning she is able to read this "precious manuscript", Jane Austen writes this situation again amusingly:

Her greedy eye glanced rapidly over a page. She started at its import. Could it be possible... If the evidence of sight might be trusted, she held a washing - bill in her hand (p. 801).

The same type of comic compendium is found in *Emma*, 'a masterpiece of comic art'. *Emma* is introduced in the same ironic but a matter-of-fact tone:

...Emma doing just what she liked; highly esteeming Miss Taylor's judgement, but directed chiefly by her own.  

Like Catherine, Emma's fanciful plans of improving Harriet are narrated in Jane Austen's inimitable ironic style. Emma thinks of Harriet as "altogether very engaging – not inconveniently shy, nor unwilling to talk – and yet so far from pushing, ... so artlessly impressed by the appearance of everything in so superior a style to what she had been used to, that she must have good sense, and deserve encouragement" (p. 20).

Once again Jane Austen ridicules Emma's fancying Frank Churchill being in love with him: "She felt immediately that she should like him; and there was a well-bred ease of manner, and a readiness to talk, which convinced her that he came intending to be acquainted with her, and that acquainted they soon must be" (p. 173).

The reader cannot fail here to see Emma lived in a fanciful world of her own.

Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* is yet another target of Jane Austen's ironic mode as she lashes out at the danger of indulging in excessive sensibility. She describes Marianne's long poetic speech which she delivers standing in front of trees in a mocking tone at Norland:

'Dear, dear Norland!' said Marianne, '... ye well-known trees!—but... No leaf will decay because we are removed, nor any branch become motionless ...'

Jane Austen is basically intended here to parody the sentimental heroine's stock reactions to places that remind her of some previous lost love. So is Marianne
who is dejected to leave her house at Norland where she also met her first love Willoughby.

However, Jane Austen becomes much more unsympathetic when she humorously describes Marianne's dejection in love when Willoughby departs which "is consistently ironized, implicitly judged as self-indulgent, ..."\textsuperscript{10} Jane Austen writes:

...this nourishment of grief was everyday applied. She spent whole hours at the piano-forté alternately singing and crying;... (p. 65)

Nonetheless, Jane Austen is unsurpassed in exposing the vanity, pride, or affectation of people. Moreover, she is happy only when she lives in the company of such people along with some comic fools. Here her narrative irony amuses her readers the most. Norman Sherry writes about this technique of Jane Austen:

The technique of ironic statement frees Jane Austen from the necessity of making involved commentaries on her characters. It is left to the reader to understand the full force of irony; and to make the criticism himself.\textsuperscript{11}

Her description of Mrs. Bennet in \textit{Pride and Prejudice} in an amusingly ironic tone has almost become a universally quoted line. She writes:

She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.\textsuperscript{12}

The same ironic introduction can be seen in \textit{Sense and Sensibility} where Mrs. Jennings is introduced:

MRS JENNINGS WAS A widow, with an ample jointure. She had only two daughters, both of whom she had lived to see respectably married, and she had now therefore nothing to do but to marry all the rest of the world (p. 29).

The same entertaining irony is used when the two comic fools are talking to each other in \textit{Pride and Prejudice}. When Mrs. Bennet suggests Elizabeth's name to Mr. Collins, instead of Jane, the ironist presents it in a tongue-in-check manner:
Mr. Collins had only to change from Jane to Elizabeth—and it was soon done—done while Mrs. Bennet was stirring the fire (p. 67).

Perhaps, this is the most ironically presented comic proposal ever made in literature. Phrases like "had only to change" or "soon done" are deliberately used by the ironist to expose Mr. Collin's foolishness and inconsistency regarding marriage that "the woman involved is of so little importance to him as a person that he can change his mind in a second. And as yet he knows nothing of the feelings of either sister towards him."13

In Northanger Abbey, once again Jane Austen brings out the hidden intentions ironically when Mrs. Allen, who was desperately looking for some friend at Bath, encounters Mrs. Thorpe. Jane Austen remarks:

... Mrs. Allen immediately recognized the features of a former schoolfellow and intimate, whom she had seen only once since their respective marriages, and that many years ago. Their joy on this meeting was very great, as well it might, since they had been contented to know nothing of each other for the last fifteen years (p. 693).

Prof. Wright observes rightly:

... the very diction demands that the statement be read ironically. Jane Austen, we must suppose, will not deny the two ladies the pleasure of joy on this occasion; but she cannot forbear to suggest the superficiality of their friendship.14

This superficiality of their affection is further mocked at by the authors ironic comments:

... they proceeded to make inquiries and... talking both together, far more ready to give than to receive information, and each hearing very little of what the other said (pp. 693-694).

Such types of simple oddities of human nature are always mocked at by Jane Austen. In fact from ironic humour she moves on to satirizing the triviality of Mrs. Allen who is forced to listen to Mrs. Thorpe's eulogy of her children, but soon consoles herself "with the discovery, which her keen eyes soon made, that the lace of Mrs. Thorpe's pelisse was not half so handsome as that on her own" (p. 694).
In *Sense and Sensibility*, once again the pretentious nature of Mrs. Dashwood and Lady Middleton, who pretend to find each other pleasant but their real intention is suggested by the following ironic statement:

There was a kind of cold-hearted selfishness on both sides, which mutually attracted them; and they sympathised with each other in an insipid propriety of demeanour, and a general want of understanding (p. 174).

Norman Sherry rightly observes the hidden reason of this pleasure "which reveals the two women in all their limitations of feeling, limitations which prevent them finding happiness in people of a true nature."¹⁶

In *Mansfield Park*, Sir Thomas Bertram cannot escape Jane Austen's all-perceiving irony and his hypocrisy becomes an obvious target when she writes that Sir Thomas Bertram would have been glad to assist Mrs. Price at the time of her marriage, "from principle as well as pride— from a general wish of doing right, and a desire of seeing all that were connected with him in situations of respectability..."¹⁶

Thus, Yasmine Gooneratne rightly observes:

His [Sir Thomas Bertram's] charitable decision to take charge of Fanny herself, to educate and provide for her, is as much prompted by theory and equally lacking in real warmth.¹⁷

There are a number of such statements which through the technique of ironic comments exposes Mr. Bertram's lack of human sympathy hidden behind his show of generosity.

Mrs. Bertram's cold indifference and ruthless behaviour towards little Fanny is treated by the novelist in her favourite device of narrative irony when she says:

'... she saw no harm in the poor little thing—and always found her very handy and quick in carrying messages and fetching what she wanted' (p. 18).

Yasmine Gooneratne elaborates this ironic criticism of Lady Bertam's selfishness towards her daughters stating:

Her selfishness, unlike his, [Thomas Bertam], had been extended to their daughters; to the education of Maria and Julia she had 'paid not the smallest attention. She had not time for such cares.'¹⁸
Jane Austen becomes almost a satirist when she brings a dog and children to the same level when she further writes:

To the education of her daughters, Lady Bertram paid not the smallest attention. She had no time for such cares. She was a woman who spent her days in sitting nicely dressed on a sofa, doing some long piece of needlework, of little use and no beauty, thinking more of her pug than her children, but very indulgent to the latter, when it did not put herself to inconvenience, ... (p.17-18)

This is how Jane Austen’s searching irony brings out all types of hypocrisy or affectation to the fore and smiles at them along with the reader. Sometimes, she wraps Mrs. Bertram and Mrs. Norris both in a single satiric tone. She writes humorously:

Lady Bertram did not go into public with her daughters. She was too indolent even to accept a mother’s gratification in witnessing their success and enjoyment at the expense of any personal trouble, and the charge was made over to her sister, who desired nothing better than a post of such honourable representation, and very thoroughly relished the means it afforded her of mixing in society without having horses to hire (p. 32).

Norman Sherry brings out the nature of simple irony when he says, “Simple irony is a statement that implies the opposite of what it is saying, or implies more than it is saying.” Undoubtedly, Jane Austen is very good at bringing out the hidden congruity or affectation of people. For example, Marry Crawford’s first meeting with her stepsister, Mrs. Grant, is narrated with an implicit irony:

The meeting was very satisfactory on each side Miss Crawford found a sister without preciseness or rusticity – a sister’s husband who looked the gentleman, and a house commodious and well fitted up; and Mrs. Grant received in those whom she hoped to love better than ever, a young man and woman of very prepossessing appearance (pp. 39-40)

Such type of hypocrisy and variety has always been the main source of Jane Austen’s ironic humour. In *Persuasion*, for instance, she humorously mocks at Sir Walter Elliot’s vanity in her favourite ironically narrative technique:

Vanity was the beginning and end of Sir Walter Elliot’s character: vanity of person and of situation. ... He considered the blessing of beauty as inferior only to the blessing of a baronetcy; and the Sir Walter Elliot, who united these gifts, was the constant object of his warmest respect and devotion.²⁰
Thus, "Jane Austen's own acid comments are likely to determine our attitude to a character without our being fully aware of it." Similarly, Elizabeth Elliot, another embodiment of pride and vanity is more strongly dismissed:

Such were Elizabeth Elliot's sentiments and sensations; such the cares to alloy, the agitation to vary, the sameness and the elegance, the prosperity and the nothingness of her scene of life;... (p. 1215)

Referring to the character of Mr. Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* Prof. Andrew Wright highlights the most important tool of Jane Austen's technique of irony. It is that she employs "the slightly grand epithet for something much more ordinary -- a characteristic method of achieving an ironic purpose". This is absolutely true in case of highlighting Sir Walter Elliot's vanity and fickleness of his admiring beauty in an apparent serious tone when at Bath, he looks forward to meet Mrs. Wallis, Jane Austen writes:

He hoped she might make some amends for the many very plain faces he was continually passing in the streets. The worst of Bath was the number of its plain women. ... He had frequently observed, as he walked, that one handsome face would be followed by thirty, or five-and-thirty frights; and once, as he had stood in a shop in Bond Street, he had counted eighty-seven women go by, one after another, without there being a tolerable face among them (p. 1294).

According to Norman Sherry, "Jane Austen does not hesitate to speak out, strongly and satirically, when it comes to revealing character faults". Obviously, Jane Austen's moral eye penetrates easily into the real intention of Sir Walter Elliot's accepting Capt. Wentworth finally, which is altogether concerned with 'rank' and 'appearance' only:

Sir Walter, indeed, though he had no affection for Anne, had no vanity flattered, to make him really happy on the occasion, was very far from thinking it a bad match for her. On the contrary, when he saw more of Captain Wentworth, saw him repeatedly by daylight, and eyed him well, he was very much struck by his personal claims, and felt that his superiority of appearance might not be unfairly balanced against her superiority of rank;... (p. 1362)

This is how vanity, pride, hypocrisy or affectation are directly attacked by the moralist Jane Austen's narrative irony. In lashing out at such idiosyncrasies her language, sometimes, goes beyond common remarks and establishes itself into the realm of maxims. Her specific epigrammatical style and tone of generalization have
made some of her comments immortal. Prof. Wright relates this technique with her honesty of statements:

...Jane Austen constructs a generalization which by the simplicity of its diction and the power of its context demands acceptance.\(^{24}\)

Moreover, he finds ironic purpose behind her art of making maxims. He writes, thus:

Actually, maxims usually express the common sense—but she goes far beyond it; and hovering about every single piece of homely wisdom is the ironic qualification.\(^{25}\)

There are a number of such maxims or “universally acknowledged truths” which are present in all her six novels— the often quoted lines and a wonderful piece of narrative irony.

The world famous and often quoted line which is a remarkable piece of Jane Austen’s sense of humour mixed with sheer realism is the opening sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*, in which “Single man of fortune” and “must be in want of wife” set forth her realistic humour of the society where money and marital relationships go hand in hand.

The same kind of ironic truth of ‘money’ and ‘marriage’ combination is stated in *Mansfield Park* when she begins the novel with Mrs. Bertram’s prosperous marriage and then in a tongue-in-cheek manner comments that her sisters “Miss Ward and Miss Frances quite as handsome as Miss Maria, did not scruple to predict their marrying with almost equal advantage. But there certainly are not so many men of large fortune in the world as there are pretty women to deserve them” (p. 01).

This is how irony helps her unique style of saying such facts in the form of truth.

Emma is full of such ironic maxims which basically reflect some kind of affectation or mannerism. Thus, when Mr. Elton is married to Miss Hawkins, a proud and conceited lady Jane Austen creates humour in her ironic epigrammatical style which implies more than what it says on the surface:

Human nature is so well disposed towards those who are in interesting situations, that a young person, who either marries or dies, is sure of being kindly spoken of (p. 164).
Placing 'marriage' and 'death' at the same level establishes Jane Austen's comedy in the immortal realm. She is unsurpassed in her ironic wit.

This is how Jane Austen has become immortal in her specific epigrammatical style which is the rich source of her achieving universal irony of common human affairs.

Such an amusing ironic generalization is again witnessed in Northanger Abbey where she burlesques the dejection in love of a heroine and its getting soothed by a gothic confidante by equating it with Catherine's mere agitation due to absence of Henry Tilney and its getting subsided by Isabella's company. She comments in her peculiar style:

Friendship is certainly the finest balm for the pangs of disappointed love (p.695).

IV

IRONY THROUGH DIALOGUE - OF CHARACTERS

Another characteristic method of Jane Austen's verbal irony is witty dialogues which she puts in the mouth of her characters. This method is definitely her main device which enables her to highlight hypocrisy or idiosyncrasies of people indirectly keeping a gentle smile on her face. Andrew H. Wright remarks in this connection:

Very much of Jane Austen's work is in dialogue form; she is a master-dramatist—with a perfect ear, a perfect sense of timing, a shrewd instinct for climax and anti-climax. And when one thinks of Jane Austen's novels one is apt to remember most clearly such conversations as that between Mr. And Mrs. Bennet on the subject of the new tenant at Netherfield Park (Pride and Prejudice, I, i), or the dialogue in which Mrs. John Dashwood dissuades her husband from doing anything beyond giving nominal offers of assistance to his stepmother and half-sisters (Sense and Sensibility, I, ii), or Sir Walter Elliot's animadversions on the Navy as a career (Persuasion, I, iii).26

The most witty dialogues to achieve an ironic purpose are witnessed in the most celebrated novel Pride and Prejudice. Elizabeth's or Mr. Bennet's intelligent wit as well as Mr. Collins' or Mrs. Bennet's foolishness are the richest sources of Jane Austen's ironic humour.
Any talk between Mr. and Mrs. Bennet always fills the novelist with a great enthusiasm to employ her ironic wit. Mr. Bennet who has compromised with the failure of his marriage by turning Mrs. Bennet’s stupidity as a means of his entertainment, always remarks ironically at his wife. And a smile comes uninvited to our lips when his witty observations make no impact because of his wife’s inability to understand them:

"... I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying which ever he chooses of the girls; though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy."

"I desire you will do no such thing, Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane,..." (p. 2)

The stupidity of Mrs. Bennet makes her unable to understand his ironic humour and “takes his whole observed suggestion as serious”. Thus, Mr. Bennet makes fun of Mrs. Bennet’s stupidity. His intellectuality contrasted with the foolishness of Mrs. Bennet creates many ironically amused scenes throughout the novel. However, Mr. Bennet who always makes fun of his wife’s “poor nerves” sometimes goes cynically satirical. When Jane, for example, has fallen sick as a result of exposure to rain, he addresses his wife like a cynic:

‘...if your daughter should have a dangerous fit of illness, if she should die, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley, and under your orders’ (p. 29).

Like Mr. Bennet, Elizabeth Bennet is another tool in the hands of the ironist to mock at the vanity, affectation or flattery as exercised by people in the society. She cannot forget the insult she met at Darcy’s hand at the Netherfield hall. Later when Sir William proposes that Darcy should dance with Elizabeth and Darcy is keen to dance with her, she immediately draws back her hand and refuses to dance. And when Sir William speaks of Mr. Darcy:

‘... this gentleman dislikes the amusement in general, he can have no objection, I am sure, to oblige us for one half hour’ (p. 23).

Elizabeth’s satirically intended reply is written by Jane Austen amusingly:

‘Mr. Darcy is all politeness,’ said Elizabeth, smiling (p. 23).
Ironically, Mr. Darcy is found unexpectedly, "thinking of her with some complacency" (p. 24). Thus, Elizabeth, who previously seemed to him as "not handsome enough" now had "a pair of fine eyes".

Sometimes Mr. Bennet's and Elizabeth's comments, however, (as they regard Mr. Bennet's wit as an escape from shouldering the responsibility) are criticized by many critics. Peter Conrad, however, is of the view that "in the different cases of Elizabeth and her father, an ironic discipline, forcing oneself to laugh at a fate which if taken seriously would be ruinously depressing. Mr. Bennet mocks his wife in order to bear living with her, Elizabeth mocks Darcy in order to bear his wounding rejection of her." 28

Thus, Mr. Bennet speaks ironically about Wickham:

'He is as fine a fellow,'... 'as ever I saw. He simpers and smirks, and makes love to us all. I am prodigiously proud of him. I defy even Sir William Lucas himself, to produce a more valuable son-in-law' (p. 318).

It is obvious that what Mr. Bennet is actually doing is mocking at himself in order to keep away from a sense of regret on having the villainous Wickham as his son-in-law who is even worse than Collins. Similarly, Elizabeth laughs at things which are otherwise too depressing to be laughed at. Peter Conrad judges it as follows:

Lightness, brightness and sparkle are very often a patient effort to smile at grief; jokes are Elizabeth's missiles against a world, which she must inhabit, composed of tyrants like Lady Catherine, snobs like Darcy, predators like Collins, tempters like Wickham and inane chatterers like her mother. 29

Thus, he further writes, "Elizabeth laughs at the pride of Darcy, the prejudice of Lady Catherine, the officious courtship of Collins and the insidious attraction of Wickham because she is their victim with only wit to save her from humiliation. She wins Darcy by subduing him to her wit." 30

Thus, Elizabeth's ironic vivacity and challenging temper are best painted through verbal irony. As stated, this type of ironic temper in her dialogues helps Elizabeth to escape from the direct assault against others. Thus, she defined the snobbish Lady Catherine's authoritarianism by disobeying her through ironic pretension of incomprehension. When Lady Catherine's proud remark saying that her conscience
must know the reason of her coming, is answered by Elizabeth’s epigrammatic style: ‘Indeed, you are mistaken, Madam. I have not been at all able to account for the honour of seeing you here’, Lady Catherine angrily replies:

‘Miss Bennet,’ replied her ladyship, in an angry tone, ‘you ought to know, that I am not to be trifled with. But however insincere you may choose to be, you shall not find me so. My character has ever been celebrated for its sincerity and frankness,...’ (p. 341)

Prof. Wright remarks:

Lady Catherine’s self-ignorance is colossal: she is to be trifled with, her ‘sincerity and frankness’ are immediately impugned, when Elizabeth retorts, ‘If you believed it impossible to be true... I wonder you took the trouble of coming so far. What could your ladyship propose by it?’  

Prof. Wright further points out the implicit irony:

Retrospectively, this interchange gains in irony, for we learn in the concluding pages that the heroine’s refusal to make such a promise to Lady Catherine is reported by Her Ladyship to Darcy himself—and this gives strength to his hope that he might be accepted.

This is how Jane Austen’s verbal irony sometimes protects her characters from falling into being cynical critics of society. And they remark at what is ludicrous with a sympathetic smile and move away.

Sometimes the novelist takes the help of verbal irony in order to indicate the real intention of the character which they otherwise tend to hide behind their speech. Vanity, pride, hypocrisy, treachery, self complacency are such traits which Jane Austen attacks through the ironically turned dialogues. Normal Sherry points out that the attitude of Jane Austen’s irony is her “habit of not accepting the impression a person wishes to give of himself, but of always pointing to the truth that lies beneath the surface,...” Thus, Lucy Steele’s confiding in Elinor in Sense and Sensibility is motivated by her intention to gratify her envy. This is clear from the following dialogue:

‘... I only wonder that I am alive after what I have suffered for Edward’s sake these last four years. ... I wonder my heart is not quite broke.’

Here she took out her handkerchief; but Elinor did not feel very compassionate.
‘Sometimes,’ continued Lucy, after wiping her eyes, ‘I think whether it would not be better for us both, to break off the matter entirely.’ As she said this, she looked directly at her companion (pp. 103-104).

But sometimes Elinor comes out with witty statement befitting Elizabeth Bennet at the pretensions of Lucy Steele which can be observed in the following dialogues:

‘... and for my part, [says Lucy Steele] I love to see children full of life and spirits; I cannot bear them if they are tame and quiet.’

‘I confess’, replied Elinor, ‘that while I am at Barton Park, I never think of tame and quiet children with any abhorrence’ (p. 95).

Like Lucy, Mrs. Dashwood (Elinor’s sister-in-law) is also attacked by Jane Austen’s sharp irony. John Dashwood wants to be supported by his wife to avoid his duty of supporting his widowed mother and three sisters. Mrs. Dashwood does it to perfection so that the final conclusion is that the widow and her daughters will be so much better in their financial condition that they would rather help him instead of being helped. She says cunningly:

‘They will live so cheap! Their housekeeping will be nothing at all. They will have no carriage, no horses, and hardly any servants; ... They will be much more able to give you something’ (p.10).

Norman Sherry rightly judges it when he writes:

The description of Mrs. Dashwood’s process of rationalisation in Sense and Sensibility is a brilliant piece of irony. ³⁴

Just as Jane Austen does with Lucy or Mrs. Dashwood, she exposes Mary Musgrove in the same manner in Persuasion. She makes Mary speak continuously of her illness which actually is an ironic exposure of her tendency of self-complacency. Mary complains:

‘I am sorry to say that I am very far from well; and... I dare say I shall catch it; and my sore-throats, you know are always worse than anybody’s’ (p. 1308).

Norman Sherry points out the comedy hidden behind it when he says, “Awareness of a person’s overriding sense of his own self-importance is another source
of the comic for Jane Austen. Mary Elliot is always imagining herself ill, which is
[ironically] her means of increasing her self-importance."35

The vanity and pride in the same manner are exposed by her unfailing verbal
irony. Like Lady Catherine, there are some more characters in other novels whose
dialogues reveal their class-consciousness in an implicit irony. Jane Austen satirizes
Sir Walter's and Elizabeth's vanity of their rank through the words that they speak:

'Wentworth? Oh ay! Mr. Wentworth, the curate of Monkford. You misled me
by the term gentleman. I thought you were speaking of some man of property :
Wentworth was nobody, I remember; quite unconnected; nothing to do with
the Strafford family. One wonders how the names of many of our nobility
become so common' (pp. 1223-1224).

Undoubtedly, Jane Austen here satirizes their trivial conceited nature and
futile rank-consciousness. Elizabeth speaks in the same tone, when she doesn't want
to invite the Crofts in the presence of Lady Dalrymple:

'Oh no! I think not. Situated as we are with Lady Dalrymple, cousins, we ought
to be very careful not to embarrass her with acquaintances she might not
approve. ... We had better leave the Crofts to find their own level. There are
several odd-looking men walking about here, who, I am told, are sailors. The
Crofts will associate with them' (p. 1310).

The author becomes more satirical when she writes:

This was Sir Walter and Elizabeth's share of interest in the letter;... (p. 1310).

The use of symbolism is another aspect which reinforces Jane Austen's
anticipating irony. David Lodge comments on this technique:

Metaphor and metaphorical symbolism are used very sparingly by Jane
Austen, and under strict constraints.36

According to him, this symbolism is supplied on "a scale of values that
contrasts ironically, and almost subliminally, with the emotional and moral issues to
which they are applied,... "37 Thus, the natural background at Sothertone becomes an
excuse for flirtation which is skilfully delineated by Jane Austen with an anticipatory
irony. The iron gate in Mansfield Park which is locked is used as an ironic symbol of
moral boundaries which Maria and Henry Crawford want to violate. Jane Austen writes the entire scene in anironically intended symbolic language when Maria insists on crossing the gate and Henry supports her. Maria says:

‘... that iron gate, that ha - ha, gives me a feeling of restraint and hardship’... 

Immediately Henry persuades Maria:

‘And for the world you would not get out without the key and without Mr. Rushworth's authority and protection, or I think you might ... pass ... the gate, here, with my assistance; I think it might be done; if you really wished... and could allow yourself to think it not prohibited.’

‘Prohibited! nonsense! I certainly can get out that way, and I will. Mr. Rushworth will be here in a moment you know—we shall not be out of sight’ (pp. 98-99).

When Maria is ready to jump, Jane Austen writes, “Fanny, feeling all this to be wrong, could not help making an effort to prevent it, ‘You will hurt yourself, Miss Bertram,’ she cried, ‘you will certainly hurt yourself against those spikes ... you had better not go’” (p. 99).

But Maria pays no attention to her advice and crosses it with Henry. A minute observation of this scene anticipates a hidden ironic fate of Maria who falls in disgrace by eloping with Henry Crawford. She is altogether hurt and insulted by Bertrams who expels her from Mansfield Park forever. Yasmine Gooneratne observes the same:

Reading such a passage, and relating it to the section of the novel from which it has been extracted, we become aware of its rich symbolism, of a complex whole in which no detail is irrelevant or extraneous to the writer’s intention.38

In fact, this scene symbolizes the entire action plan of the novel when Julia, for example, comes to know their crossing the gate together, she feels not only jealous but also is further induced by Maria's eloping with Henry. And she also elopes with Mr. Yates.

At the same time, Mr. Rushworth’s speech near the iron-gate foretells his future. Fanny consoles him on seeing his sad countenance:
‘Miss Bertram thought you would follow her.’

Mr. Rushworth gloomily replies:

‘I should not have had to follow her if she had staid’ (p. 101).

This scene also symbolizes Fanny’s self-control and moral restraint when she tries to stop Maria and not to think herself to cross the gate.

V

THE SITUATIONAL / DRAMATIC IRONY

According to Norman Sherry, the ironic “view of life affects her [Jane Austen’s] novels since, very often, the plot itself has this ironic aspect of turning back on itself, so that the characters in her novels are forced into a similar reversal.”39

Thus, the ironic reversals of her characters’ lives impart an aesthetic beauty to her novels. However, it must be noticed that in Jane Austen’s arena all fights and battles of her characters finally have a comic end. There is no room for tragedy or dismal change of ironic fate in her design of situational irony. Based on the type of ironic turns as found in her novel her dramatic irony can be divided into three sections.

The first section deals with the ironic revelation of the reality which dawns on her heroines who begin with a fancied belief of life but end with opening their eyes to reality.

Catherine Morland, Marianne Dashwood, Emma and Elizabeth Bennet are those heroines who go through an ironic orientation of life.

Catherine Morland in Northanger Abbey completes her moral education through the ironic reversal of gothic fantasy when she visits Northanger Abbey and meets with real life villains. Prof. Wright remarks that the two planned sections of the novel display an ambivalent attitude towards her subject matter. As partly it is “to expose through burlesque the Gothic delusions, and partly to display with irony the human condition of naïveté: ...”40
Catherine's fantasy of confusing life with literature is washed off by her mentor lover, Henry Tilney. She meets reality finally and finds that contrary to her belief, Henry Tilney's mother met with natural death and that Northanger Abbey is not haunted by any kind of mysterious facts and is a normal type of place.

Jane Austen's irony at this moment is reinforced with a great vigour when Catherine finds with humiliation that her newly acquired practical wisdom is also limited. Thus she grapples with two real-life villains, General Tilney and Isabella Thorpe with an anticipatory irony. General Tilney's words, therefore, are coloured with such irony when he tells Catherine:

'... no endeavours shall be wanting on our side to make Northanger Abbey not wholly disagreeable' (p. 776).

Prof. Wright taking a similar example of Mr. Collins in Pride and Prejudice writes in this context:

... both are unconscious of the ironies which they so often utter. In the case of the general, this postscript to his invitation to Catherine is but a subtle forewarning of the kind of man he will turn out to be: he is a villain, ... the agent of Catherine's realization that common sense, of which she is gradually learning the value, is itself limited.41

This is how General Tilney's real life villainy ironically opens Catherine's eye to the hard reality of life.

Similarly, Isabella Thorpe initially seems a genuine friend of Catherine who attempts to abet Catherine's gothic illusion. But Jane Austen's planned irony unravels the reality when Catherine is pushed on the hard ground of reality by Isabella's shrewdness and villainous nature. The irony is strengthened when Isabella who attempts to leave Catherine in the world of illusion ironically brings her out from this world and unknowingly brings her face to face with reality by her own villainy.

The same kind of irony is witnessed in Emma who is also brought to reality after going through a number of ironic reversals. Robert Liddell writes in this connection:

... Emma in her wrong-headed (and quite sufficiently condemned and punished) match-making tried to detach Harriet Smith from Robert Martin. Her bossy interference with other people's lives was disagreeable, ...42
Emma suffers from an illusion which is described by Jane Austen as "the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself." (p. 3) Obviously this mind of Emma, full of illusions, troubles many people by her vain attempts to mould their lives in the way she wants to. But Jane Austen’s comic irony finally dispels her as she goes through a number of incidents which bring realization. And finally Emma comes face to face with reality, the real life which does not always run on match-making but can be influenced by money or passionate love too.

The reader, thus, enjoys Emma’s committing errors owing to her living in an illusory world where she wants to play with everyone like puppets. Her meetings with Mr. Knightley are interwoven with comic irony. She is, for instance, indignant at Mr. Kr. Knightley’s approval of Robert Martin as the best suitor for Harriet and bursts out:

“What! Think a farmer…, You are not just to Harriet’s claims… It would be a degradation” (p. 56).

But Emma’s words go against herself because of her sheer ignorance of reality and ironically enough, it is not Mr. Knightley but Emma herself who is unjust to Harriet by persuading her to reject Robert Martin.

Robert Martin seems to her an inferior match for Harriet as she erroneously thinks her to be the daughter of ‘a gentleman of fortune’. But she gets a rude shock when she finds that Harriet is but a natural daughter of a commoner with little fortune in hand. And, therefore, Robert Martin is more than a perfect match for her. This is how Jane Austen employs a number of ironical situations which comically portray a divided mind. And to depict this kind of situational comic irony she uses that technique of irony which is to put a speech into a character’s mouth which is not intended by the speaker as irony but become ironic in effect.

Another such type of comic scene takes place at Cole’s party. Duped by Frank Churchill’s seemingly flirtish behaviour Emma blindly believes Jane Fairfax to be in love with Mr. Dixon. Frank Churchill encourages her fancy and speaks loudly the name of Mr. Dixon Emma foolishly whispers to him:

“You speak too plain. She must understand you.”

“I hope she does. … I am not in the least ashamed of my meaning.”

“But really, I am half ashamed, and wish I had never taken up the idea” (p. 222).
Ironically enough, she has to be really ashamed of her own fancy when reality dawns on her that Jane and Frank are secretly in love and that Frank was using her as his shield to hide his love-affair with Jane. Thus, she suffers and repents.

The final realization completes Emma's education when Harriet confesses her love and reverence for Mr. Knightley but Emma's fanciful mind thinks Frank Churchill to be that man. Jane Austen writes with an amusing irony the following dialogue when Harriet considers herself to be quite inferior to Mr. Knightley and is contented "to admire him at a distance, ..." Emma promptly replies:

"I am not at all surprised at you, Harriet. The service he rendered you was enough to warm your heart."

"Service! Oh, it was such an inexpressible obligation! ..."

"It is very natural. ... I am determined against all interference. Henceforward, I know nothing of the matter. Let no name ever pass our lips. We were very wrong before; we will be cautious now..." (p. 313)

Once again Emma is duped by her own fancy which can't distinguish the difference between appearance and reality.

This 'he' who was actually Mr. Knightley appears as Frank to Emma. She is led astray by her illusion of matching Frank with Harriet who saved her earlier from the hands of gypsies, despite her resolution of not committing the same error.

Thus, her resolution to be more "cautious now" is again proved wrong. The reality is far different. The ironical effect of each of her word is realised by herself in chapter 47, when Harriet directly confesses her love for Mr. Knightley. Emma is shocked, humiliated, and sits silently acknowledging the whole truth. Moreover, with an amusing but surprising irony she realizes that it is she herself who should marry Mr. Knightley. Jane Austen remarks:

It darted through her with the speed of an arrow that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself! (p. 375)

The reader is taken away with a gentle but deep smile when he recalls Emma's words uttered by her previously to challenge Mr. Knightley saying, "Were you, yourself, ever to marry, she is the very woman for you. ..." (p. 58) But now, the ironic reversal
of situation leaves Emma mortified and shocked. Jane Austen's comment makes the pitiable condition of Emma more explicit:

Mr. Knightley and Harriet Smith! Such an elevation on her side! Such a debasement on his (p. 380)!

Thus, now Emma is forced to see the gap between the status of Harriet and Mr. Knightley. And this reality eventually leads Emma to realize her own love for Mr. Knightley and she is happy to see Harriet with Martin.

The conflict of appearance and reality is once again taken up by the novelist in *Sense and Sensibility* while dealing with Marianne's craze for sentimental love. Jane Austen's constant criticism of Marianne's excessive sensibility is executed through various ironical techniques. She gently realizes Marianne's weakening tendencies of excessive emotionalism which was quite in vogue in the contemporary novel. Yasmine Gooneratne writes:

Marianne's personality begins in satire, for the structure of the novel, pitting sense against sensibility, demands that her romantic enthusiasm should be criticized through laughter.\(^{43}\)

Willoughby who seems a true and intense lover to Marianne, makes her feel proud of her love. On the other hand, Elinor's and Edward Ferrars' sensible but restrained love seems to her a wrong definition of love. She always rejects Elinor's sense and persuades her to be more open, frank and ready to accept life as a liberty from all kinds of restraints. Marianne does not realize that her youthful idealism of individualism has only resulted in a free indulgence of arrogance and self-complacency. Undoubtedly, Jane Austen's morally designed situational irony makes Marianne undergo a painful realization of reality when the very embodiment of her ideal love quits her to shake the hand of a lady of fortune. She repents, she suffers, still, she cannot see Elinor's tender feeling and thinks that Elinor can never feel her agony as she has not faced such a type of rejection in love.

But to her surprise, her agony is intensified, and is full of remorse when she comes to know that Elinor too has been undergoing the same crisis constantly for six month. But Elinor's sense of restraint has never let it out before others. Marianne's illusory sensibility, thus, is defeated when it meets the reality; i.e. Elinor's sense:
Her sense equips Elinor to face life's realities, while sensibility robs Marianne of the power ever to defend herself. 44

And finally Marianne learns reality which is altogether contrary to her romantic fancy — sense is superior to sensibility. Laurence Lerner comments:

*Sense and Sensibility* is mixed-up in the most radical way imaginable. It is meant to be a comedy in which we come to realize the superiority of Sense: we are to be fond of Marianne, but we are to smile at her, and we are to see that Elinor's restraint and wisdom are more valuable than her emotionalism. 45

Interestingly the novel goes beyond the novelist's design when ironically Elinor too is left incomplete without learning intense emotions. Though, Elinor's sense is portrayed as something valuable as she too finds sensibility as much an important part of life. Elinor's marriage with Edward after having gone through many types of romantic upheavals and Marianne's marriage with Col. Brandon (a prosaic and sensible person) is the proof of this double-layered irony. In fact, the author's two-fold irony is found to be more interesting when against the wishes of the author, the reader seems to sympathise more with Marianne than Elinor on account of Marianne's suffering. While Elinor's controlled temperament keeps her away from the reader. Such an unconscious irony is, thus, another part of the dramatic irony of Jane Austen. However, some critics call it the victory of the character on its creator.

Jane Austen's lively irony is once again used as an important device to educate a prejudiced mind. Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* is the most vivid and popular character whose fame mainly lies in that interesting situational comedy which finally brings the reality into light.

Wickham's pretending to be a gentleman fires Elizabeth's mortified pride which eventually strengthens her prejudice against Mr. Darcy. She easily believes Wickham's words:

'How strange!' cried Elizabeth. 'How abominable! — I wonder that the very pride of this Mr. Darcy has not made him just to you! — If from no better motive, ... his dishonesty I must call it' (p. 78).

At the same time Elizabeth's feelings for Wickham is described thus by the novelist:
Elizabeth honoured him for such feelings, and thought him handsomer than ever as he expressed them (p. 76).

This false perception about both Wickham and Darcy is worn off when Elizabeth comes face to face with reality. Wickham's elopement with Lydia, Mr. Darcy's rescuing Lydia and confession of his love for Elizabeth a second time are some of those interesting situations which are woven round Elizabeth's prejudiced eye. And she can finally see the reality of Mr. Darcy's inner goodness and Wickham's dishonesty. Such ironic turns complete Elizabeth's education and she is purged of both prejudice as well as pride. She cries painfully:

—Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think, without feeling that she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd (p. 201).

Thus, "We recognise that Elizabeth Bennet's claims to right judgement are invalidated by her prejudice against Darcy. Ironically, life is to show her how wrong she was."46 She is absolutely proved wrong in case of Charlotte Lucas, Wickham and Mr. Darcy and above all about herself too.

This is how the comic situational irony makes Jane Austen's work more alive and vivid. In fact what is more entertaining in such technique is that the reader has "more knowledge of what is happening than the characters involved. So he watches them moving forward blindly, and can anticipate the shock they are to receive."47

Thus, the reader enjoys not only Elizabeth's realization of truth but also that of Mr. Darcy. Mr. Darcy's opinion that "my good opinion once lost is lost for ever" and his views on Elizabeth not being handsome enough to tempt him ironically prove to be wrong. He changes gradually to admire the beauty of the same girl. Her intellectual wit which always rebels against his class pride ironically captivates him. Thus, on the surface, it seems that Elizabeth's refusal of dancing with Mr. Darcy at the party or her rejection of Mr. Darcy's first proposal will part them forever. But, ironically enough, the reality is quite different. Her defiance of Mr. Darcy's class consciousness ironically brings him closer to her which eventually melts his pride. Now Mr. Darcy considers Elizabeth "as one of the handsomest women" (p. 260), who was earlier not even handsome enough to tempt him to dance. Thus, it is playful irony that unites the two characters after they have overcome their pride and prejudice. Thus, Elizabeth's blindly
working against Mr. Darcy while Darcy's feeling the danger of paying Elizabeth too much attention are Jane Austen's favourite situations to give free play to her technique of dramatic irony.

(b)

As already stated in previous chapter, Jane Austen's last two novels, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion* are the most serious and didactic novels and the characters are almost flat. However, irony does exist herein revealing ironic facts of life. But the usual dramatic irony resulting from the ignorance of the heroines is missing here, as both heroines are morally superior to their earlier counterparts. Still Fanny Price's priggishness and Anne Elliot's weakness in being persuaded by Lady Russell bring them into same ironical situations which the ironist exploits through her favourite technical device -- the situational irony. In addition what is more interesting in these two novels is the conflict of appearance and reality where the victims are the heroes -- Edmund Bertram and Captain Wentworth -- rather than the heroines.

Edmund Bertram in *Mansfield Park* is gripped temporarily in the clutches of Mary Crawford's outward charm which he thinks as reality. He is so blind to Mary's fake love that he cannot see the true and genuine love of Fanny. As Denis Donoghue writes:

... poor Edmund in *Mansfield Park* is so bewitched by Mary Crawford's charm that he forgets the civilities due to Fanny, especially at Sotherton.48

But gradually he undergoes a process of self-knowledge through a number of ironic situations to recognise Mary's morally inferior temperament. Finally when she takes Maria's elopement with Henry for granted calling it mere "folly"; Edmund repents at his choice of Mary. His eyes are opened to reality. This ironic turn in his life, thus helps him to choose the right partner for him -- Fanny Price. Now he can penetrate into the danger of free, unrestricted and uncandid nature of Mary Crawford as well as the inner goodness of a seemingly priggish girl i.e. Fanny Price.

In the same manner, Captain Wentworth in *Persuasion* is also taught by the moralist through a superb piece of dramatic irony.

Anne Elliot's giving in to Mrs. Russell's persuasion and Louisa Musgrove's free and open temperament come as two contrastive traits which confuse Captain
Wentworth. He is unable to distinguish between appearance and reality. He is led to take the appearance of Louisa’s so called “power of mind” and Anne’s “lack of strength of feeling” as reality of their nature. But the novelist designs the plot with some interesting ironical situations which eventually open Wentworth’s eyes to reality. “At Lyme, Wentworth sees the folly of his own ideas about “power of mind” exemplified in Louisa Musgrove, and at the same time learns to appreciate Anne’s true strength of character.”\textsuperscript{49} The incident which is already discussed in the previous chapter involves Louisa’s foolish jump which causes a severe injury to her and Anne’s sensible tackling of this situation.

The light of reality removes all darkness from his mind and he sees that it was not weakness of mind of Anne to be persuaded by her godmother, but she did so out of her deference to Lady Russell. Thus he can “see that self-control and self-denial are as admirable as self-assertion.”\textsuperscript{50} This is how the reality which lies beneath the surface of appearance is brought out through the technique of ironical reversal of situations in \textit{Persuasion}. Jane Austen writes:

There, he had learnt to distinguish between the steadiness of principle and the obstinacy of self-will, between the darings of heedlessness and the resolution of a collected mind (p. 1358).

The same method is applied with Jane Austen’s both morally right heroines’ lives too, though, not so vividly. Fanny Price faces reality when she realizes the ironic truth that she can belong to only Mansfield despite its seeming worldliness. An ironic turn in her life takes place when she goes back to Portsmouth at the end of the novel. Here, the novel ends with a superb piece of dramatic irony when Sir Thomas sends Fanny to Portsmouth in the hope that a view of her original home might remedy her unwillingness to accept Henry Crawford; it teaches Fanny the inferiority and lack of candid atmosphere of Portsmouth but, ironically, not in the way Sir Thomas wished. The ironical contrast of Mansfield Park with its peace and tranquillity and Portsmouth with its dirty, discarded and noisy atmosphere leads Fanny to see the reality which further strengthens her decision to marry only Edward Bertram not Henry Crawford.

Similarly Anne Elliot in \textit{Persuasion} also comes out of her belief that prudence is everything in life. Her adherence to filial duty more than marital duty takes her to the world of woeful spinsterhood. Moler writes:
Anne Elliot’s youthful prudence almost causes her to become an unhappy old maid. Fortunately, however, Anne repents and escapes from a world of heartless elegance to one where love and friendship prevail.\(^{51}\)

Undoubtedly, she repents because of her coming close to reality which is ironically opposed to what she expected. She rejects Captain Wentworth as she believes Lady Russell’s words that their marriage cannot make a happy match and that it might put Wentworth into trouble. But gradually she realizes, having undergone the agony of a spinster’s life, that her persuasion has made no one happy; rather they both are unhappy. Thus, she realizes that “romance” is equal to “prudence”. And after eight years, she is finally united with Captain Wentworth.

Lady Russell also realizes the fault of her blind belief that monetary aspect is the only promise of happiness in marriage. The most deft touch of irony is applied by the novelist when Mr. Elliot's treacherous deeds as well as his intrigue with Mrs. Clay is revealed and once again Mrs. Russell is proved wrong in her match-making. She persuades Anne to reject Captain Wentworth. She suggests Mr. Elliot as the right suitor for Anne. But ironically Captain Wentworth emerges as the right choice for Anne, which Lady Russell has to accept, however, with a sense of embarrassment.

(c)

The technique of ironic reversals also enables Jane Austen to prove her moral point of view. However, the ironical situations mostly culminate in a happy ending, the moral message given through them is quite serious. Thus, from *Northanger Abbey* to *Persuasion* her use of dramatic irony is majorly intended to find the Truth in order to teach the distinction between the appearance of the charm of evil and the beauty of the inner goodness. Denis Donoghue speaks of such truth through words and actions of her characters:

We know that by ‘Truth’ she means, in human relationships, a direct correlation of speech and action.\(^{52}\)

He further states that “two great temptations which lie across the path of truth in Jane Austen’s fiction are ‘charm’ and selfishness”.\(^{53}\) According to him Jane Austen “was afraid of charming, worthless, clever men like Willoughby, Wickham, Crawford, and Frank Churchill. She knew that charm in such men is notoriously beguiling;...\(^{54}\)
They are introduced with such a charming air that her heroines are almost bewitched by them. Even the most intelligent heroine Elizabeth Bennet is duped by Wickham's charm. This fills the reader with anticipation that they will marry these charming men. But, on the contrary, they are finally proved insensible, selfish, hypocrites and ironically, they educate the heroines and they extend hands of love for the right men. Thus, what is expected earlier is changed entirely into contrastive shade at the end. This device of dramatic irony is the main charm of her novels.

The villainy of these smart and charming characters including some other characters also like the Bingley sisters, Isabella Thorpe, Lucy Steele or Mary Crawford ironically pushes her heroines towards 'education' to see the reality. And worldliness, selfishness, greed, immoral traits, hypocrisy or affectation is brought to the fore which had remained hidden under their charming personality. On the other hand, steadiness, constancy, inner beauty are also proved of her morally superior characters finally.

The novelist introduces her charming characters in such a way that the reader is led to think they will finally defeat the good characters. But to his surprise, they are finally defeated by the good ones when reality removes ignorance. And this procedure involves a number of comically imparted ironical situations which is Jane Austen's forte.
IRONY THROUGH VARIOUS TECHNICAL DEVICES
IN RUTH PRAWER JHABVALA’S NOVELS

A very sensitive and creative writer Ruth Prawer Jhabvala is placed side by side with Jane Austen especially in her use of irony in her domestic comedies. Irony is revealed through a masterly projected narrative technique; the various types of conversation of her characters and the unexpected reversal of situations in their lives. These are the tools which equip the novelist to penetrate the social reality of an alien culture with a critical ironic vision.

Obviously here lies the opportunity to the novelist where despite being a detached observer, she can give voice to her own perspective directly through the narration or indirectly through the mouth of her character. Prof. Shahane judges this situation:

She [Jhabvala] is present at the side of her characters, in the author's corner of her scenes; she watches them and comments on their actions, modes of feeling and thought process. She is at the centre, but the centre is outside the varied and overall circles of her creations. She thus seems to be an outsider for a while, yet she plunges into the small circles, enters the consciousness of her characters and then describes what she has observed and assessed so meticulously.55

This is perhaps the best judgement of Jhabvala's method of using ironic devices by which her moral outlook and the understanding of cultural clash is projected best as compared to that of any other Anglo-Indian writer or Indo-Anglian writer.

In earlier novels these technical devices are used in a sympathetic humorous tone but become more critical and harsh in later novels. As already stated in previous chapters, this change is an outcome of an expatriate’s growing disillusionment with India. Thus, humorous narrative irony or amusingly ironic dialogues give way to cynically satiric description of Indian climate and Indian culture and tragic reversals of situations in her later novels.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala applies various technical devices to create ironic humour mainly on three grounds which is suggested by R.S. Singh:
Ironies are exposed mainly on three levels: either the incompatibility of personal ideal and circumstantial reality or incongruities consequent upon the inharmonious blending of two modes of life, the Eastern and the Western: or the clash between tradition and modernity within the framework of a family.56

The present section deals with Jhabvala’s use of technical devices in three parts. The first part deals with Jhabvala’s use of narrative irony; the next part reveals another form of irony, i.e. irony through dialogues and the final part looks into the situational irony as found in all her eight novels.

VII

IRONY THROUGH NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala is a good story teller narrating the simple common life of middle class Indians as well as Europeans vividly. The masterly narrative technique provides her ample opportunity to lash out at what is incongruous. The ironic laughter as well as cynical satire mostly appeal through her direct remarks on some incidents, objects, manners or characters. As an omniscient narrator Jhabvala takes even an insignificant or small incident or object under her moral visual perspective and describes it elaborately to reveal its ironic incongruities. Obviously India is the main focus of her technique which Prof. Shahane calls the “‘subject’” of her style. He writes:

Jhabvala’s style is the ‘subject’ (and not ‘the man’ as Buffon would have us believe) and this ‘subject’ is India in relation to a western creative writer’s sensibility. This amorphous Indian landscape, natural as well as human, comes within the range of her descriptive and narrative ability and she projects upon it her visionary power greatly circumscribed by her naturalistic and ironic traits.57

The incompatibility of tradition and modernity in the middle class family life is Jhabvala’s forte in her earlier novels where she finds exuberant situations to laugh at with her ironic comments. The young lovers are her main targets here – such as Hari and Amrita, Nimmi and Pheroze; Shakuntala and Esmond; Vishnu and Sumi etc.

Jhabvala apparently takes the side of her characters while expressing their mental thought processes. But the reader can realize that in reality, she is mocking at them. Hari’s inconstancy in love in Amrita, his obsession for food, his inattentive
temper, all are narrated through Amrita's thinking of it as the simplicity of poor people which is mocked by Jhabvala:

It became rather embarrassing sometimes to have to sit and wait for him so long, all alone... Certainly she never blamed him: his unpunctuality was for her part of his charm. He was delightfully unpractical, so truly Indian, so unworldly, that he could not think of hard set European things like time and clocks.  

Undoubtedly, the reader is amused to see the illusory love of Amrita. The irony turns more entertaining when at the end of the novel Amrita is found rejoicing when she gets Krishna Sengupta's letter confessing his love for her. Jhabvala writes in her usual ironic commentary on Amrita's emotional turbulence:

Amrita paced up and down the lawn, too excited to stay still. She held Krishna's letter... sometimes she laughed and hid her face in her hands.... Only sometimes she thought, 'poor Hari' and wondered how she would be able to tell him; but the thought did not disturb her nearly as much as she felt it ought to, ... please to come and eat her dinner, or what would her mother say (pp. 281-282).

Thus, Jhabvala unfolds the inconstant love of both Amrita and Hari in a masterly fashion through her narration which can be enjoyed only after realizing the ironic twist hidden in it.

Jhabvala's narrative irony is highly entertaining when she narrates Hari's attitude towards his love. What can be more humorous than the following mental dilemma of Hari when he is caught between his cavalier love for Amrita and his innate susceptibility to the charm of the Punjabi girl, Sushila. Jhabvala describes this in her favourite ironic tone:

She [Sushila] was pretty, very pretty-prettier than Amrita even, though he did not care to admit this too openly to himself-she had a beautiful voice,... A man can could not ask for a better wife (p. 115).

Further, Jhabvala almost satirizes Hari's thinking when he finds Sushila better than Amrita:

Then too, Sushila was a girl from his own community, she had been reared against the same background... He would be able to eat with his fingers and
burp when he wanted to (many a time had he suffered discomfort in Amrita's presence because he had not wished to offend her with a noise which was probably not taken as much for granted in her family circle as it was in his). He would be able to speak his native, racy, colloquial Punjabi and feel no embarrassment because his English was not as good as it might be (p. 115).

Finally, the chapter ends with a satiric comment on Hari when Suri terms love as game and Hari replies:

'Love is not a game', Hari protested somewhat weakly. At the same moment he could not help wishing that it were (p. 117).

The entire novel is replete with such ironic and satiric comments on Hari's futile love for Amrita. Finally, Jhabvala ends this hollow sentimental love of Hari by narrating his inclination towards Sushila in an ironic tone. He had to go Prema's house to meet Amrita and her family. But seeing Sushila on his way turns his mind towards her charm. Jhabvala's narrative irony successfully attacks the way in which Hari's mind works:

His eyes now were moist with tears, and he walked along chewing his pān and thinking of the inevitable, the fate-ordained ending to his great love. He framed the sentences—our souls are as one—the cruel world tears us asunder—and stepped out of the way... He was to be sacrificed in marriage... for he would think of nothing but Amrita, the lost... But suddenly he visualised thick black lashes lowered [of Sushila]... rounded cheek... how thin Amrita was getting, ... so thin and weak always, not like a fresh young girl... (p. 185).

Hari quits the idea of talking to Amrita at Prema's house and goes home back, thinking:

And anyway, what was the point of talking now, it was all settled, he would sacrifices himself to the wishes of his family (p. 185).

The reader cannot help laughing at the real meaning of "sacrifice" which is motivated by his sensual charm of Sushila's beauty.

The sentimental love of the young generation is more acutely mocked at by Jhabvala in *The Nature of Passion* and *Esmond in India*. It is notable here that verbal irony acquires a satiric purpose in the nature of comedy of manners in these novels. Nimmi and Pheroze in *The Nature of Passion* are ridiculed by Jhabvala whenever they meet. For example, their visit to Kutb is described in the same ironic humour:
Nimmi looked round and tried to feel the right sensations. All this was so old, so historic, so ruined; and the moonlight so romantic – she tried to find a line of poetry to fit the occasion but all that came in to her head was 'I galloped, Dirk galloped, we galloped all three,' from the Selections from Browning which she was studying for her English exam. She did not want Pheroze to think her unfeeling, so she said 'It is so beautiful, it makes one think of all the old times and the Moghul Emperors like Akbar and Jehangir and Shahjehan.' Pheroze, elegant and modern and fashionable in his well-cut white evening suit and black bow tie, said 'The Kutb Minar was built in the thirteenth century A.D. by Altamsh.'

There can be no other piece of verbal irony (both narrative and of dialogue) so humorous and full of laughter than this.

The young generations' cry for living a fashionable westernised modern life is another goal of Jhabvala's satiric statements. The youth's passion for throwing parties, smoking, flirting etc. are keenly ridiculed by Jhabvala. Nimmi and Viddi, for example, are ridiculed for the same reason. Jhabvala, thus, smiles secretly with her readers at Nimmi and her friend Rajan:

Nimmi and Rajan walked along the corridor, proud and graceful, their heads in the air... they were very conscious of their position as the prettiest and most fashionable girls of their year (p. 45).

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's technique, in this way, is the perfect example of her ironical observations more specially of Indians. Sometimes even she becomes quite merciless in exposing the hollowness and pretentiousness of the so-called sophisticated, anglicised Indians who under the impact of western culture downgrade their own heritage. Conducting parties in western style is a passion for them. Jhabvala's unsparing irony doesn't leave them untouched. The England returned son of Laleji in The Nature of Passion, for example, gives excessive importance to western manners like his wife Kanta does. Jhabvala describes the way these characters ape the West in a passage where Kanta organises a party at her home:

She had supervised the polishing of all the cutlery and glasses herself, had impressed upon the bearer a hundred times to keep the tray quite still while the guests were serving themselves, ... For tonight she was going to serve English food,... (p. 66)
Similarly, her instructions to the bearer for striking the gong only three times, her admiration of Nimmi as the right person (fashionable and modern) to accompany her as host and her preparation to face the jealousy and envy or critical remarks of officers’ wives, all are soaked in a gentle humorous irony. At such moment, Jhabvala’s acute sight cannot fail to mention Nimmi’s craze for such parties too:

Nimmi joined in the general amusement though she did not quite get the point of the jokes. But it was wonderful sitting there, listening and looking and sipping her sherry, which she tried to persuade herself she liked (p. 71).

On the other hand, Chandra’s Head never comes with his wife as she was “old fashioned” and it is ridiculed as follows:

She was socially a great drawback; really one had to feel sorry for the Head (p. 72).

The same ironical tone is observed in Viddi’s craze for living a westernised life through parties and clubs. Jhabvala writes:

He [Viddi] admired Tivari very much, for Tivari was a journalist and had been to England and smoked cigars. He had a well-paid government post, but no one had ever known him to go to any office. Most of the time he sat about in restaurants and let other people buy drinks for him (p. 34).

This blunt ironical statement of the novelist is deepened into a grim realistic portrayal of such Indian youth when she describes how Viddi dreams of living a bohemian life. He would “throw late night parties [in his well furnished flat] to his friends; … All the girls present would be beautiful and artistic and very modern” (p. 35). Thus, the reader cannot help smiling at the real reason of Viddi’s urge for living “an artistic life” which is actually a life of wine, cigarettes and parties only.

Jhabvala emerges as the perfect ironist when she smiles at Viddi, Nimmi, Kuku and other so-called modern generation who visit a night club party. Here Viddi seems to be the main target of Jhabvala’s irony. He is shocked to see Nimmi at this club:

He [Viddi] was surprised, and his first thought was what the family would say if they saw Nimmi sitting in a place like this, alone with a young man who was a Parsi. But it was a thought he checked immediately; …because it was right
for his sister to be here, to be emancipated. It raised his own status in the fashionable world to have such a sister (p. 192).

Thus, a description of a party or a visit to a club has always been a favourite opportunity for Jhabvala to expose the pseudo-modern life of young Indians of post-independent era. At the same time, she also lashes out at their superficial interest in national affairs through her narrative irony. In *Get Ready for Battle*, for example, Jhabvala describes a party scene with an ironic smile:

> It was a fashionable party, ... and there was a drinking and smoking and even some harmless sexless flirtation.\(^{60}\)

She directs her attention at Toto and Ushi who join the talk on India's steel plant, industrial progress and so on to prove themselves intelligent and concerned about India. Jhabvala further writes ironically:

> Toto and Ushi were pleased; they liked to get such discussions going on, it showed that they were not just flighty young socialities but on the contrary, deeply concerned with questions of national importance.\(^{61}\)

The superficiality of the talk is very obvious. It reflects the writer's gradual transformation from a humourist to a social critic.

(b)

The so-called social reformers from the affluent class have always been the main target of her narrative ironic commentary tinged with satire. Mrs. Bhatnagar in *Get Ready for Battle*, is described with high sounding titles in her typical satiric tone:

> She (Mrs. Bhatnagar) was President of the All-India Society for Bringing Hygiene to the Depressed Classes, Vice-President of the All-India Rehabilitation Centre for Immoral Women, and Treasurer of the All-India Home-Crafts for Industrial Workers Society.\(^{62}\)

H.M. Williams observes in this connection:

> The roll-call of high sounding titles, the euphemisms, and the repetition of "All India" are significantly satirical.\(^{63}\)
The hollowness of such workers is exposed when ironically she sides with the capitalist not with the Bundi-Basti.

Mrs. Kaul in *A Backward Place* is yet another representative of such westernised social workers whose service in the cause of cultural advancement is nothing but to maintain their own supremacy in the society and meeting with other high-society. No one can miss the ironic tone of the novelist, where Mrs. Kaul has assembled some so-called cultural people for a discussion on the professional theatre:

They were to discuss the formation of a professional theatre group in an informal way in Mrs. Kaul's drawing room, and to aid this civilized discussion Mrs. Kaul had laid a very civilized tea to which Hochstads and Claissa, all three of whom had very healthy appetites, did fine justice.

The same kind of such superficial "do-gooders" become the main focus of the ironist in *To Whom She Will*. In chapter V Tarla's house is the meeting place of these so-called social workers, which is narrated with an amusing irony and Austenian humour by Jhabvala. Their concern for rich and relishing lunch, the showing-off of Prof. Hoch, Vazir Dayal, Lady Ram Prashad become the greatest opportunity for Jhabvala to mock their superficial concern for Indian culture, their mannerisms and hypocrisy. Lady Ram Prashad, for example, who was eating less than others is attacked by Jhabvala's ironic comment:

Lady Ram Prashad had to think of her figure; since she often had to appear on public platforms to address meetings or inaugurate new ventures, she did want to look at least dignified (p. 40).

Prof. Hoch is also ridiculed for taking social work for cultural promotion and general gossiping at the same level. Jhabvala writes:

Professor Hoch was kept very busy. Besides eating, he had to talk art with Vazir Dayal, Amrita with Radha, social work with Lady Ram Prashad and Tarla, and admire Dr. Mukherji's simple ways (pp. 40-41).

In contrast to these women, there are Sarla Devi and Charlotte who are real social workers. But their work is recognised by none. Jhabvala comments satirically at such attitude of the society who can only shout at protection of Indian culture but do nothing for it. In *A New Dominion*, for example, Rao Sahib talks admiringly of the Indian Government Policy towards the closing of Christian missions, in order to prove himself as the real protector of India. Jhabvala is ready with her ironic comments:
Raymond was sad: Rao Sahib’s words were so big and Miss Charlotte’s efforts so small.65

Prof. Shahane calls this remark as “a fine stroke of civilized irony’ which shows the total indifference of Rao Sahib to Charlotte’s or other missionaries’ dedicated work to the society.

This is how these westernised people of India with their craze for throwing lavish parties or their so-called endeavours of social work become the main butt of Jhabvala’s narrative irony and her mild satire.

(c)

In A Backward Place, A New Dominion and Heat and Dust Jhabvala’s narrative technique acquires a new style—segmentary commentary in different sections. Undoubtedly it symbolizes the confused state of mind and broken dreams of her expatriate characters. This is very obvious, that this modern device results in relentless irony and cynical and satiric exposure of Indians and disparaging comments on Indian climate. Her narration is mostly aimed at to prove that Indians are almost sternly sensual, sex-hungry, pretentious and manipulative. Lee, for example, unwillingly gives in to Gopi’s sexual demand. Jhabvala’s bitterness and relentless irony is apparent when Lee regards this as a part of merging with Indian spiritual identity. Jhabvala writes:

But she was glad to be doing this for him, and at the final moment thought to herself that perhaps this was part of the merging she has so ardently desired, while looking out of the window.66

This relentless irony finally fades into satiric and grotesque narration of ‘swamiji’, a moral humbug whose sexual assaults and calling Lee by beastly names are described in grotesque language:

The same irony is pointed out by Ralph J. Crane aptly:

It is on a sexual rather than spiritual level that Lee encounters India, first through Gopi, and later through Swamiji. But… does not, in one respect at least, find any answers.67
This bitterness goes extreme in Heat and Dust which is reflected through her bitter irony and sarcastic comments. In fact, in this last novel Jhabvala's use of symbolism plays an important role in her narrative technique. The effect of Indian heat and backwardness turns Jhabvala quite bitter. In Heat and Dust, for example, the narrator is deeply moved to see the miserable condition of a beggar-woman. She writes:

What I understood best was that the problem of the beggar woman, if I wished to undertake it, was now mine.

But after seeing the crowded hospital-corridors, soon the narrator is surprised to see a change in her attitude which she thinks is the result of the effect of unredeemed Indian poverty and total indifference of people toward it. Jhabvala writes:

"Then where should she die?" I had asked Dr. Gopal. It had seemed a forceful question to me at the time, but now it no longer was so. Now a new thought—... presented itself to me, ... that the old woman was dispensable. I was surprised at myself. I realised I was changing, becoming more like everyone else but also I thought that, if one lives here, it is best to be like everyone else. Perhaps there is even no choice: everything around me—... seemed to compel me into this attitude (p. 112).

This is how her earlier amusing narrative irony and mild satire ultimately ends with direct sarcastic comments and bitter language. Undoubtedly the reason lies in her failure to identify herself with Indian sensibility. And the spiritual seekers become the main instrument of her pouring forth her bitter feelings through stinging ironic comments. Chid, for instance, is advised by his 'guru' to live like a mendicant, under a tree and depend on the charities of others for food. Jhabvala comments: "In practice, however, he found this did not work too well, and he had often to write home for money to be sent by telegraphic order" (p. 23). In her ironic vein the novelist continues the story of this spiritual seekers: "He found it impossible to live simply under trees as instructed by his guru but had to seek shelter at night in cheap hotel rooms where he had to bargain quite hard in order to be quoted a reasonable price" (p. 23). Finally Chid falls a prey to poverty and squalor and returns sick from a pilgrimage.

This is how Jhabvala's narrative irony lashes at the clash of dreamy seekers and totally incompatible reality of Indian environment.
IRONY THROUGH DIALOGUE\% OF CHARACTERS

Jhabvala's verbal irony, the hallmark of her writing, is equally splendid and masterly, projected in the form of dialogues. The ironically designed dialogues of her characters are not only intended to create humour or criticism but also provide her a mouth piece to voice her own point of view, as she does in her narrative device. However, Jhavala's characters sometimes become quite ambiguous instead of being ironical. It is perhaps because of the type of characters who are neither black nor white but grey in shade. Paul Sharrad goes one step ahead when he says:

Within the system of Jhabvala's ironical rhetoric, the more emphatic and voluble a character is, the less he or she is to be trusted.\(^{69}\)

This can easily be employed in ambiguous irony which is more frequent in her later novels. This section looks at Jhabvala's verbal irony which is employed on adolescent love; on affectation of money minded society; on mixed marriages and ironic situations of expatriate seekers.

To satirize the sentimental love of the young generation Jhabvala has used both verbal and dramatic irony in her earlier novels. The narrative irony in this connection has already been discussed in the present chapter. Also, the high sounding dialogues of the adolescent lovers have been looked at in the chapter, titled, Theme.

Novels like The Nature of Passion, To Whom She Will and Esmond in India highlight Jhabvala's ability to portray adolescent love through humorous dialogues which form the very basis of her ironic mode. In Esmond in India, for instance, Shakuntala's illusory romantic stuff is satirized by Jhabvala through the following love scene of Shakuntala and Esmond which exposes the difference between the attitude of the two. Shakuntala pleads:

'I do love you. From the very first moment I saw you I loved you. I cannot hide it any longer. If I do, it will break me, my heart will burst.'

'Hearts don't burst that easily.... no, no, I am not laughing at you, but do try and be sensible. Remember your parents allowed you to come here because they trusted us to look after you—\(^{70}\)'
Esmond’s words ridiculed Shakuntala’s adolescent love. But Jhabvala’s irony goes beyond this scene and brings Esmond too in her focus when Esmond finally gives into Shakuntala’s demand of sharing her bed.

(b)

Another social evil which frequently becomes the butt of Jhabvala’s verbal irony is the pretension, affectation, pomp and show of society ruled by money.

In Chapter 23 in To Whom She Will the meeting of Prema and Radha is an example of their showing off to one another. When Radha reaches Hari’s house, Prema rushes to meet her. But as she sees Radha, she is sorry that she has not changed her clothes and says:

“I came running so quickly,” Prema said in her genteelest accent, “I did not even, as you see, change my clothes. I walked here,” she explained to Radha. “It is very close so I did not need the car.”

Radha said, ‘I will take you back in my car if you wish. My chauffeur is with me.’ This was unnecessary because Prema had seen both car and chauffeur standing outside (p. 168).

The reader is amused when he recalls Radha’s frustration at not having a car when the novel begins and that she has borrowed this car from her sister Tarla.

In The Nature of Passion there are innumerable examples of such dialogues. Chandra’s and Kanta’s intellectual snobbery, for example of being honest finally goes away when Lalaji indirectly hints at the fact that their monetary help will be stopped if Chandra does not remove the letter from the file which can lead Lalaji into trouble. Kanta bursts out:

‘And how could you help yourself, what could you do when your own father came to you and blackmailed you?’

‘That is what he did,’ Chandra said and he sounded more cheerful, ‘he blackmailed me, that is the word for it.’

Then Kanta worries about her summer trip and the costly education of her children which Lalaji always manages:
'They are his grand children and you are his daughter-in-law,' Chandra said, 'and yet he would sacrifice you, for a letter' (p. 180).

And then Kanta forces him to accept Lalaji's proposal.

The implicit irony makes the reader smile when he recalls that earlier neither of them was even willing to accept Lalaji as a member of their family. And to keep themselves away from Lalaji's old fashioned and money-minded ways they were living in a separate house. But now that their social status is at stake, Kanta becomes the dutiful daughter-in-law of Lalaji, and her children, his grand children. The exposure of such hypocrisy is, thus, well brought out by Jhabvala through ironical dialogues.

(c)

Jhabvala's verbal irony penetrates a middle class family in The Householder. Here she creates ironic humour against a backdrop of financial problems. Prem's poverty in The Householder turns him into a submissive service-householder, who has failed in every field. The following words uttered by Prem to young Romesh, thus, seem to be foolish and ironical when he is philosophising about duties of a householder:

'In our ancient writings it is written... that there are four stages to a man's life. When he is young, a student, learning from his father and his teachers...' After that comes the life of the householder... In this stage a man must raise a family and see to their needs...'

Prof. Shahane remarks:

Prem is the 'householder' (in Sanskrit, the Grihausthashrami) who is continuously obsessed by a sense of failure. However, he too indulges in the mode of citing ancient Indian scriptures for banal causes.

Obviously his words sound quite ironical. Jhabvala does not stop here and brings irony into play when on seeing samosas Prem, "quietly skipped the fourth stage (The Renunciation) 'of which he was not sure.'"}

Jhabvala's verbal irony is mainly intended not only to create humour but also to make the reader think how poverty turns someone into a submissive or servile
person. Thus, when Prem meets Hans, the dialogue that takes place sounds quite ludicrous. V.A. Shahane comments:

Jhabvala has truly mastered the art of the ironic stroke. While Hans is greatly influenced by India’s spiritual richness and declares enthusiastically, ‘How I love your India.’, Prem feels impelled to make some timely comment and declares, ‘since Independence we have made great strides forward. For instance, our Second Five Year Plan —’

Thus, Prem and Hans, miserably fail to communicate with each other, as Hans is talking of India on philosophic ground, while Prem follows his words in economic or political terms. Thus, Prem’s obsession with money is brought out very comically.

(d)

This comic irony gives way to a satirized portrayal of the corrupting power of money in Get Ready for Battle. This novel is another “of Jhabvala’s intricately designed novels, which demonstrates the novelist’s artistic and social pre-occupation with a money-civilization, in and around Delhi, and also a protest against the values of that civilization.” The ironic dialogues of Sarla Devi and Vishnu project a sort of symbolic irony which runs through the entire passage. Vishnu comes to his mother to talk about her (Sarla Devi’s) divorce, but Sarla Devi ironically considers this matter less important than the problem of Bundi-basti. She urges:

“Something must be done. It is so shameful so degrading that hundreds of families must be turned out of their homes, ...”

Here Vishnu holding Bhagwat Gita is reading a phrase “over and over again” when Sarla Devi snatching his book says restlessly:

“Oh Vishnu, Vishnu, why are you like that? You are my son, you are as beautiful as Krishna, as strong as Arjuna... you must stand up son, and fight...”

And Vishnu replies dejectedly, as if unaffected by her high-sounding speech:

“Fling yourself, where, how?... Then Get Ready for Battle” — but there was no battle he could take part in, aching with unspent strength though he was.”
Radha Bijawat writes in this connection:

The entire situation become highly ironical and the title loses its significance especially when Vishnu says, "That's all I ever hear, great long words which sound beautiful, but when you want something more, there is nothing." 78

This scene is finally satirized by Jhabvala with her realistic disposition of Vishnu’s decision to go Chandniapat to join Joginder Singh’s plan of building a pen factory instead of fighting for the poor people. Thus, his battle is a battle for making money.

The novel also sets forth the utter backwardness and gruesome description of repulsive poverty. Jhabvala’s initial enthusiasm seems to wear off fast and now she is painfully haunted by Indian poverty. She sarcastically expresses her own feelings through Pitu’s words:

“A nation on the starvation line, such as we are... has no right to any traditions.” 80

Thus, in a world haunted by extreme poverty and backwardness any talk of culture and tradition seems ridiculous and trivial which is always satirized by Jhabvala. In an interview, when R.G. Agarwal asks her to comment on the contemporary literary scene in India, Jhabvala replies:

“I don’t have any opinion about that. It seems a ludicrous presumption to talk about any kind of “cultural scene” in a country living at so low a level of development.” 81

(e)

Thus, her verbal irony, through dialogues, mocks at such social workers who, instead of sincerely trying to eradicate poverty, waste their time in meetings and gatherings for the cultural upliftment of India. As Jhabvala’s narrative irony exposes these high-class westernised Indians, so do the ironic comments voiced through the character’s mouth. In A Backward Place, for example, Sudhir, a young man with high ideals, ironically says how Cultural Dais is important for Mrs. Kaul. “‘The Cultural Dais for her stands for social advancement, a place where you can meet nice and interesting people and be in touch and be important...’” (p. 87) This sarcastic remark is true of
all the so-called promoters of culture, who engage in the activity as a hobby. It is only their personal vanity that urges them to take up the service. Similarly, when Mrs. Kaul feels that they are not doing much, Sudhir remarks sarcastically:

‘I think we must extend our activities,’ she [Mrs. Kaul] said and sounded wistful, as if the Dais was beginning to disappoint her. ‘But we are already doing so much,’ Sudhir told her. ‘We have had a Japanese expert… a Scandinavian expert … a Russian… an English expert on the French novel, a French expert on the English novel — and now we are to have a Swiss…’

‘And our teas,’ said Sudhir. ‘At which everyone meets and mingle freely and the juices of the intellect are made to flow’ (p. 177).

It is as if the novelist herself is speaking ironically about the hollow achievements of the Cultural Dais, through Sudhir’s mouth.

The same sarcastic and ironically tinged comments can be met in To Whom She Will when at Tarla’s house a gathering of such westernised social workers is pictured in an ironical manner. Enjoying a rich lunch Prof. Hoch’s, boasting is pictured by Jhabvala in her favourite verbal irony:

‘And Indian womanhood,’ said Professor Hoch, raising a dessert-spoon heaped with mocha soufflé by way of toast, ‘is the greatest justification of feminine emancipation. A modern Indian lady is one of the rarest, finest flowers civilisation has yet brought forth.’

All the ladies, except Dr. Mukharji, looked modest.

‘Of course,’ said Tarla, in her best platform manner, ‘the greatest step forward was the abandonment of the idea of early marriage. …’

Dr. Mukharji made her second contribution to the conversation: ‘Last week,’ she said, ‘my sweeper’s daughter was married. She is twelve’ (p. 42).

The stark statement brings out the hollowness of the so-called social workers.

In Esmond in India, such pseudo social work is directly satirized in the following dialogue when Amrit ridicules Shakuntala who holds their father’s (Hardyal’s) working for cultural committee in high regard:
'Daddyji's committees,' Amrit said, 'and all this Art and Culture and fiddle-faddle, …'

'Fiddle what!' Shakuntala cried.

'— are very nice to keep old gentlemen busy but, why do we pretend they serve any useful purpose' (p. 55).

Prof. Shahane goes one step further when he writes in this regard:

However, the irony that Shakuntala aims at directing at the materialistic businessmen, the big chaps of India’s business world, is turned against herself. Neither she nor her father is free from the stigma of materialism which both take pleasure in attacking. 

(f)

Jhabvala’s quest for material reality takes a tragic turn when European characters start appearing in the post-Independent Indian society. Her technical devices are now inclined toward satiric and cynical portrayals, instead of ironic laughter. It starts first when these outsiders come in touch with Indianess through mixed marriages.

Esmond in Esmond in India, Jhabvala’s first victim of cultural clash is turned into an embodiment of sarcasm and satire. Though he is a guide on Indian culture, ironically enough, he cannot leave behind his instincts of colonialism which finally breaks up his marriage. Gulab’s Indian beauty is soon replaced by his hatred of her Indian manners and unsophisticated life. He assaults her and calls her a ‘slut’:

‘You’ve got what I can only call a wonderful propensity to squalor. Tell me now, if pressed on the point, would you call yourself a slut?’

‘Yes please?’, she asked politely. Afterwards she and Ravi would get into bed together (p. 47).

A slut may mean a woman who is not properly dressed and careless about her appearance. The other meaning of the word is that of a lady with loose morals. Needless to say, his sarcastic pun is ironically lost on Gulab, who cannot comprehend his venomous remarks. Thus, it is Esmond himself, who becomes the centre of ridicule as far as the readers are concerned. Such incidents frequently occur in this novel. In fact, the same incident happens in the other state too when Esmond tries to speak in Hindustani language. Jhabvala describes the scene with an ironic smile on her lips:
‘In my house,’ Esmond explained to the servant in his very bad but very careful Hindustani, ‘I expect absolute and immediate obedience. …’ The servant began slowly and clumsily to clear the table. … [He] wondered what the Sahib was saying, he could not even identify the language he was speaking. Esmond gave him a long and sonorous lecture on his duties; he rather enjoyed listening to himself speaking in Hindustani (pp. 41-42).

Shyam M. Asnani rightly remarks:

... the novelist has observed her Indians from very close quarters. She depicts the uneasy and comic manner in which East and West are shown meeting, but only superficially. She describes, as no other writer writing in English has been able to describe, how funny, incongruous and tragic such a meeting could be.\(^3\)

\(g\)

The next novel, *A Backward Place*, is a contribution of the theme of mixed marriages resulting in disastrous consequences which is depicted by Jhabvala through verbal irony or satiric language used by her characters. In this novel Esmond’s role is taken up by Judy, who, unlike Esmond, endeavours to protect her marriage with Bal. Esmond’s colonialism and sneering, thus, is given to another European lady, Etta who has undergone four flopped marriages. As a result, she is more frustrated and cynical in her attitude. She always goads Judy to leave her husband, Bal. She scornfully says to Judy: “You’re just rotting here” (p.6). She almost loses her control when she sees Judy wearing a Sari:

“It’s no use sinking down to anyone’s level. Judy, we must always try to raise them up to ours” (p. 8).

An implicit irony makes the reader know the reality of Etta’s words like “rotting” or “sinking down”. She has already divorced four husbands and is having an illicit and uncertain relationship with Gupta. This uncertainty always gives her a great sense of insecurity and fear. Thus, it is she who is rotting here because of her vain attempt to lead a European way of life in India. While, Judy saves her marital life and is happier than Etta in her life.

The next problem faced by her European characters is the most complicated mystery. The clash of spiritual search and material reality resulting in a big catastrophe
is obviously projected in the most bitterly-tinged dialogues. *A Backward Place*, *A New Dominion* and *Heat and Dust* are entirely painted in satiric hue and tragic colour. The spiritual seekers are unfortunately trapped by fake Swamijis. In *A New Dominion*, for example, speaking to Raymond, about Lee, Evie and Margaret, the Swamiji says:

‘They would sit all day and discuss about themselves... For them their own personality is the most important subject in the world. But - poor girls - what personality do they have worth talking about? They are like little mice, quite undeveloped. And when I try to develop them, they run away from me’.84

The dialogue itself unfolds the employed irony. “This pompous, pretentious claim”, in Prof. Shahane’s words, “and the desire to develop their personalities bring about the abominable elements in the Swamiji’s character”.85 But, unfortunately these misled spiritual seekers are easily deceived by mysterious words of Gurus and Swamijis. And they start talking like Swamiji. When Raymond shows no interest in Lee’s account of her new guru, she blindly repeats some typical words used by Swamiji:

‘What was the use of coming to India if all you did here was to be a tourist. Tourists don’t live, they only look – and looking is nothing, it doesn’t change you, it doesn’t help you really and truly find yourself.’86

Evie speaks in the same tone when after Margaret’s death the question arises of her burial or cremation. She argues that Margaret was a Hindu and tries to define Hinduism in Swamiji’s language:

‘Becoming a Hindu is not like becoming a Christian. You don’t have to take formal baptism or anything but freely assent to the Truth within you.’87

Words like “truly find yourself” or “truth within you” are ironically uttered by those mad seekers who don’t know the values of such words. They don’t even understand their meaning. Ironically, none of them could find any truth and they were sexually exploited by Swamiji. Undoubtedly Jhabvala is ridiculing their illusion through their own words. But in Margaret’s case, she is entirely a harsh critic of India who not only brings Margaret in her satiric forte but also pours forth her own bitterness through verbal irony. Margaret, swayed by Swamiji’s deceiving words, is not ready to go to hospital for her treatment as she was suffering from hepatitis. When Raymond insists, she burst out in Swamiji’s typical language:
"Doctors don’t know a thing. These diseases that people get in India, they are not physical, they are pure psychic. We only get them because we try to resist India—because we shut ourselves in our littered western egos and don’t want to give ourselves. But once we learn to yield then they just fall away."

This is the most bitterly projected verbal irony used by Jhabvala. The spiritual search of her expatriate characters turns them almost blind and mad. Margaret relates the illness with mysticism and as a result meets her death. Radha Bijawat aptly remarks in this context:

In these lines Jhabvala is ironical, bitter and critical of India, and of those Europeans who in their everlasting quest for spiritualism and a total merger in this world lose their good sense. Margaret goes back to the Ashram only to come back after a few months in the last stages of her life, only to die in pathetic condition in the store room of a small hospital in Maupur. The entire situation appears to be highly oppressive and one cannot help but think whether this was her way of merging herself completely in this world, the new dominion, never to return.

This frantic search for spirituality finally culminates into utter frustration which can be better comprehended in the following satiric dialogue of two European characters in Heat and Dust. The narrator asks an expatriate seeker, an English girl why she has come to India, she replies:

“To find peace.” She laughed grimly: “But all I found was dysentery.”

Her young man said “That’s all anyone ever finds here” (p. 21).

Speaking of ‘peace’ and ‘dysentery’ in the same breath reflects Jhabvala’s complete disillusionment about and frustration with India.

IX

THE SITUATIONAL / DRAMATIC IRONY

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s technique involves verbal irony and irony of characters quite skilfully in order to paint the incongruities, foibles or hypocrisies of people against the backdrop of cultural clash. Her unfailing talent of narration or writing dialogues places her characters in a fractured world – a world of appearance and of reality. This situation eventually invites another ironical device, i.e. the irony of situation.
The irony of situation is also employed by her to reflect the incompatibility of characters who can never meet. This irony, too, begins with comic colours gradually acquiring greyish hue and finally ending in a dark tragedy. All these devices help her perfectly to give out a minute description of Indian customs, rituals, and above all its daily routine life at the outset of fast changing Indian society of post-independent era. Her European sensibility spares no opportunity to utilize it in her style of narration. S.K. Tikko rightly observes: "...as an artist she employs the usual devices which might be used only when an artist works on materials outside his or her own culture."\(^90\)

Quite obviously, Jhabvala is concerned more with cultural background than human psyche or human colours. That is why, her situational irony lacks the perfection of her verbal irony. Prof. Shahane writes in this connection:

Jhabvala uses different forms of irony such as verbal irony or rhetorical irony, but her fiction does not provide many examples of dramatic or tragic irony.\(^91\)

Thus, the basic mode of her situational irony is mainly comic. It is tragic only in later novels. But this tragic irony too differs from traditional tragic irony where destiny, chance or fate is primarily involved in bringing ironic catastrophe to her characters. Jhabvala is not so much concerned with fate or unseen power as she is largely preoccupied with Indian climate. Prof. Shahane remarks:

In a realist like Ruth Prawer Jhabvala we find a very sensitive creative writer, however, she is mostly preoccupied with the environment only, with India as its focal point.\(^92\)

Therefore, her irony lacks cosmic irony that engrosses the entire atmosphere of the story. Nevertheless she uses situational irony which "arises out of a discrepancy between the appearance of a situation and the reality that underlies it. She follows the technique of dissimulation or concealment of real meaning or exposing the discrepancy between two levels of reality in portraying characters and situations in her novels."\(^93\)

Her vision of Indian life begins with half-westernised Indian families against the backdrop of cultural clash of tradition and modernity. The emancipated girls like Amrita and Nimmi or Shakuntala live their own fanciful world of illusory love which they perceive as reality. The young boys like Hari, Viddi, Kuku, Bal, Sudhir or Vishnu are also caught in their bewildering fancy. Nimmi and Pheroze in *The Nature of Passion*
and Amrita and Hari To Whom She Will embody pseudo-modernism, which seems
the real world for them. But soon they are face to face with reality. Their love loses
ground as soon as they are confronted with real problems of life. They realize the
reality and move back to their parents and accept the arranged marriage, set by them.
Ramesh Chadha referring to the same point writes: "In fact, the modernism of Amrita
and Hari in To Whom She Will and of Nimmi and Pheroze Batliwala in The Nature of
Passion is pseudo-modernism which loses ground as soon as it faces real problems
of life. In both the novels, when the parents come to know about the love affairs of their
daughters, they do not lose any time to arrange marriages for them. The irony of
situation is that the girls also accept the proposals made by their parents." Jhabvala
amusingly narrates when Amrita reads Krishna’s letter and feels "too excited to stay
still". The same is seen in The Nature of Passion when Nimmi is very happy to have
Kuku as her would-be husband:

... she tried hard to suppress it – that she was very happy. For it was almost
as good as... choosing one’s own husband... he looked so nice, so young,
... that it was quite easy to imagine they were young lovers and their marriage
of their own choosing (pp. 256-257).

On the other hand, in To Whom She Will Hari is relaxed and cheerful about
his marriage to Sushila, the girl selected by his family from their own community. His
illusory love for Amrita is swept away and he sees the reality with a happy heart and
finally marries Sushila. Jhabvala ends the novel thus: "... and now she [Sushila] was
his, ... he was suddenly so happy, he felt he had never been so happy in all his life" (p.
283). Viddi is another apparent non-conformist who is led by false notions of pseudo-
modernistic life. He always opposes his father’s and his elder brother Om’s deep
interest in making money. But he comes face-to-face with the money-dominated world
when in the restaurant he is unable to pay but is spared on account of being the son of
Lalaji. This opens his eyes to the importance of money and the reputation of Lalaji.
He is now looking forward to getting Rs. 500/- per month on joining his family business.
Jhabvala concludes the novel with a superb ironically symbolic note:

Shanta looked up and for a moment she thought Viddi was her husband, he
looked so much like him; even his voice, it seemed to her, sounded like Om’s
(p. 262).

Thus, all the children of Lalaji ultimately bow to reality and accept Lalaji’s
conditions. Thus they all get moulded into a chip of the old block. Ramesh Chadha
finds an interesting situational irony portrayed by Jhabvala in order to satirize the so-called emancipated and non-conformist young generation of India. He writes, thus:

The transition from conformity to non-conformity is obvious on individual and social planes but in these novels we find the reversal of the movement from non-conformism to conformism.95

This domestic comedy is intermingled with some intellectual seekers in her earlier novels. Krishna Sengupta in To Whom She Will, Sudhir in A Backward Place or Gautam and Sarla Devi in Get Ready for Battle are some examples of the intellectual stream of post-independent India. Initially they are introduced as vigorous fighters who voice Jhabvala’s criticism of the hypocrisy, affectation and backwardness of Indian society. But very soon their reformer-spirit seems an illusion only as the reality of the money-ridden society cannot perceive their idealism which is too theoretical to be practised virtually.

Jhabvala’s realistic irony renders them as those angels who are beating their wings in a totally indifferent society. They, in fact, lack that vigour and substance which can change the society. However, Sarla Devi is the only character who emerges as a substantive social reformer who actually fights for the poor. But the realist Jhabvala’s unsparring irony leaves her standing all alone. She loses each and every battle ironically. Ramchander, the leader of Bundi-basti rebels, is bought off by a bribe. Vishnu turns into a capitalist and her brother Brij Mohan goes to the side of Gulzarilal. Thus, her spirit to fight and her insisting on Vishnu to get ready for battle, all seem quite illusory stuff when they are posed against the hard reality of society. Vishnu is ready for battle, but not to fight against the rich but to get himself rich. Thus, the title itself loses its value against the hard ground of reality. Like Sarla Devi, Gautam is another idealist. Ironically enough, his quixotic idealism too pushes Vishnu more on mercenary path than on social service. “Ironically it is the idealist”, as H.M. Williams writes, “and socialist Gautam who inadvertently introduces him to the man (Joginder) who inspires him with the fountain-pen scheme in driving Vishnu into becoming as dedicated a capitalist as his father.”96 In this way, as H.M. Williams suggests further, “it is gentle irony that plays over the abortive schemes of Gautam which even Sumi can see through. His idealism is harmless because it is never practised and even Vishnu takes comfort and pleasure from his quixotic nature.”97 Thus, his quixotic planning of opening a model school along with Vishnu, ironically enables him to come to a decision of opening a fountain-pen-factory in Bombay. H.M. Williams aptly observes the irony hidden in this decision which he writes:
The two idealists Sarla Devi and Gautam succeed in fact in driving Vishnu into becoming as dedicated a Capitalist as his father.98

The same ironic revelation of reality sweeps over Krishna Sengupta in To Whom She Will and Sudhir in A Backward Place who are introduced as intellectual thinkers and critics of snobbery and affectation of upper-middle class society. But they too fail to change even a single stone of the wall, which is made of monetary bricks and stone. And, ironically enough, Krishna accepts Amrita from an aristocratic family and enjoys doing his job. Sudhir, having been disillusioned with cultural Dais, leaves for a remote village of Madhya Pradesh to execute the literacy programme. Thus, people like Ram Nath, Sudhir and Sarla Devi who stick to their idealism, ironically, are rendered lonely and desolate while people like Vishnu, Bal, Hari, Viddi, Nimmi and Amrita get on happily in their life by accepting the conditions laid down by a money-ridden society. Moreover, Jhabvala too brings these characters at the centre of her novel and those idealistic characters remain in the background only. This is because, Jhabvala’s world is much more complex and variegated, inhabited by people who are neither heroes nor heroines but real, common people trying to live up to their expectations by accepting what comes their way.

Unlike these novels in The Householder Jhabvala’s situational irony gains a philosophic tone. Prem, who fails in every field because of want of money finally seeks shelter with a Swamiji with a view that this spiritual life only can give him real happiness. But, ironically enough, soon, he realizes that real happiness lies not in running away from duties but in facing them boldly. He can now meet the truth that original contentment lies in accepting the duties of a householder in spite of unfavourable circumstances.

We find this kind of acceptance of Indian life in Jhabvala’s earlier novels. With the passage of time, however, disillusionment starts resulting in harsh and bitter criticism of almost everything Indian. The comic irony gives place to tragic dramatic sequences and we have characters like Esmond, Judy, Etta, Lee, Olivia, Raymond giving voice to their creator’s disgust and disillusionment with India. The cultural clash forms the backdrop of these dark comedies.

As already discussed in the section on verbal irony, the expatriate’s tragedy is segmented into two parts - irony of mixed marriages and irony of spiritual seekers. Both types of ironical situations meet the same tragic end — total disillusionment about India.
Esmond and Gulab fall in love and marry. But this love turns out to be an illusory fascination of one another’s culture — “the dark eyed” Gulab and angel like “blue eyed” Esmond. When they come face to face with reality, the situation is quite the opposite. The question of identity makes their lives miserable. They find it difficult to cope with one another’s cultural habits and feel themselves trapped in their marital cage. R.S. Singh writes in this regard:

Then the novelist lingers on the irony of their relationship to substantiate her view: Gulab is lazy, she likes spicy food and sweets and hates furniture... [whereas] Esmond detests all these habits. In his life mattered just the opposite of what Gulab did and thought.  

The ironic revelation of reality, thus, is catastrophic and they both part ways to go back to their environment. Undoubtedly the entire scene of this broken marriage is caught by an expatriate writer’s sensibility which basically sides with Esmond’s tragedy only. The predictable picture of East-West encounter in marriage which obviously fails is once again drawn through Etta’s life in *A Backward Place*. However, Jhabvala’s situational irony is not so tragic in the case of Judy and Bal.

These are only episodic frictional scenes where the clash of cultures becomes evident in Judy and Bal’s married lives. Judy’s pragmatism is hurt to see Bal’s irrational and irresponsible way of life. But despite realising the vast gulf between the two Judy doesn’t want to leave him to become “lonelier and lonelier”. The situation becomes ironical when Judy packs up to come with Bal for an uncertain journey believing more like old Buaji in destiny. The question once asked by Jhabvala herself — “Should one want to try and become something other than what one is?” is answered in two ways in these two novels. Esmond’s problem is similar to that of Jhabvala herself and answers “one should not”; whereas Judy manifests the other possibility of saying “yes”. Perhaps, Jhabvala attempts for the last time to compromise with her European sensibility.

But in her next two novels, no hope is left for her. The situation turns into tragic irony when her spiritual seekers mistake sexual life as the path to reach spirituality.
and meet a tragic end. R.S. Singh rightly observes that in Jhabvala's technique of irony "it is conceivable that she highlights the irony of ambition and attainment, vision and revision, and emancipation and illusion. And this is done mostly by weaving out situations in a way that the responses of the characters to those situations reveal their contradictions". This contradiction carries her European characters to the verge of tragic revelation of reality.

Weary of materialistic life of West her European characters come down to India in search of solace and spiritual peace. The dramatic confrontation of her mad seekers is matched with the sexual harassment, lesbian relationship, scorching heat and insufferable dust of Indian poverty and backwardness. Here lies Jhabvala's tragic irony in its darkest shade.

Lee, Margaret, Evie, Clarissa, Olivia's grand-daughter, Chid and many other such European seekers are already taken up with the western material life. Indian scriptures and its mystic beauty attract them so much that they create their own kind of spiritual world which they start searching in Indian 'Ashrams' and various holy places. Unfortunately, they are caught in the hands of pernicious and demoniac 'Swamijis' and 'Gurus' or passionate Indians who seduce these seekers in all ways and destroy them completely. Thus their illusion of India as a land of mystics, beauty and spirituality vanishes and they are left facing an unpleasant reality, far from spiritual reality — the ironic reality which projects India as the most repulsive, erotic and backward land inhabited by lustful sages, neurotics and people desirous frenetically of having sexual intercourse with these seekers. Jhabvala symbolizes, this negative scenario of India through two words — 'heat' and 'dust'.

India's gruesome poverty, illiteracy, religious fanaticism, disease and utter backwardness break down the entire image of expatriates and they undergo an insufferable and torturous trauma to see this reality.

Obviously Jhabvala by now has lost all her sympathy for India. Now she openly pours out her wrath against everything Indian through these characters. Her hatred of India seems to have become an obsession in these novels.

All this she brings out through ironical symbolization of Indian sun and dust. On the surface heat and dust may be climatic objects. But, what they actually stand for
are the heat of passion and extreme poverty which are found everywhere in India as heat and dust.

The heat distorts the seekers' quest for India and they easily fall a prey to the lascivious desires of "Swamijis". Margaret dies because of hepatitis as Swamiji doesn't provide her medical help. Evie and Lee go back to Swamiji. The most dark irony is depicted when "Lee leaving the Swami believes she is now free. She does not yet see that hatred can be as obsessive a link as love; and ... she will discover this truth. Paradoxically the sadistic Swamiji's ultimate power over her is sexual not religious."  

H.M. Williams calls "Lee's involvement with the Swami" as "erotic and neurotic".  

Similarly Clarissa stumbles on ironic reality to see the extreme poverty of India. Though she attempts a lot to merge with Indian environment, her miserable plight renders her condition ridiculous and trivial in her visionary love of Indian mysticism.

Olivia and her grand daughter, on the other hand, become victims of the passionate love of two Indian Nawab and Inderlal respectively. Their fanciful love of Indianness proves to be completely an illusion. Both become pregnant and live a desolate and lonely life. The Indian heat shatters all their dreams and they undergo an almost neurotic trauma of mental torture.

In this way, the oriental spiritualism finally proves to be merely an appearance and the spiritual seekers fail miserably to merge with Indian reality which they find appalling and unbearable.

This is how both Jane Austen and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala apply various devices in their technique and prove themselves as perfect ironists of English literature. They both make their readers laugh with their amazing ironic humour successfully. However, Jhabvala also brings tears and sometimes hatred into readers' eyes by her dark comedies. Nevertheless, both ironists are unsurpassed in their art.
NOTES


6. Ibid.


   All further references to this edition will be displayed in the body of the thesis through parentheses.


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18. Ibid., p.113.


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26. Ibid., pp.79-80.


29. Ibid., pp.85-86.

30. Ibid., p.91.


32. Ibid.

34. Ibid., p.106.

35. Ibid., p.103.


37. Ibid.


40. Andrew H. Wright, *Jane Austen’s Novels*, p.75.

41. Ibid., p.181.


44. Ibid., p.65.


47. Ibid.


50. Ibid., p.217.

51. Ibid., p.188.


53. Ibid., p.45.
54. Ibid., pp.45-46.


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73. Ibid.

74. Ibid., p. 66.

75. Ibid., p. 99.

76. Quoted by Radha Bijawat, The Evolving Image of India in the Novels of Mrs. Ruth P. Jhabvala, p. 97.

77. Ibid.

78. Ibid.


80. Quoted by Radha Bijawat, op. cit., p. 115.


82. Vasant A. Shahane, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, p. 96.


84. Quoted by Vasant A. Shahane, op. cit., p. 114.

85. Vasant A. Shahane, op. cit., p. 115.


89. Radha Bijawat, *op.cit*, p.152.


93. Ibid., p.85.


95. Ibid.


97. Ibid., p.47.

98. Ibid., p.41.


103. Ibid.

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