PREFACE

Soon after taking M.BPhil. degree in English, I registered myself as a research scholar in Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli. As a student in the M.Phil. English classes, I was fascinated by Indian novelists in English and more so by women writers of fiction. For my M.Phil. dissertation, I analysed Nectar in a Sieve and A Handful of Rice, two of the novels of the gifted woman writer Kamala Markandaya. When I was thinking of taking up some woman novelist for my Ph.D. thesis, the fiction of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala struck me; I thought that she deserved a place of distinction among writers who wrote about and are writing about India. When I read her novels and short stories I noticed a remarkable progress from a light-hearted, gentle comic mood to a serious, ironic mood. With this idea in mind, I started my study "From Comic Objectivity to Ironic Self-Discovery" in the fiction of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. I was encouraged and guided in my pursuit by my revered teacher Dr.S.Raman.

At the time when I began my work, there were three full-length studies on the fiction of Jhabvala: The Fiction of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, by Haydn Moore Williams; Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, by Vasant A. Shahane; and Silence, Exile and Cunning, by Yasmine Gooneratne. I cannot deny the fact that these books inspired and encouraged me to go ahead with my research work. What I have tried is to trace the gradual growth in Jhabvala's narrative mode and technique from the time she entered India in 1951. Her unique position as "a foreigner in our midst" gives her an importance which cannot be ignored in an assessment of contemporary Indian writing in English.
I thank the librarians and staff of the Bharathidasan University Library, Tiruchirapalli, St. Joseph's College Library, Tiruchirapalli, and A. Veeriya Vandayar Memorial Sri Pushpam College Library, Poondi, Tanjore District, for their kind help in my academic pursuit.

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