CHAPTER- 2

R.P. JHABVALA

There has been a marked increase in short story writing in recent decades. There are many reasons for this. The short story can easily reach a wide audience through popular magazines and newspapers. Practically every major newspaper has a short-story section as standard fare. Literary journals like Indian Literature and the Yatra series feature short stories on a regular basis. The Katha series is specifically devoted to publishing Indian language stories in English translation. Magazines have always been in the forefront in promoting the short story—witness the example of The Illustrated Weekly of India. More than any other literary form, the short story is a ready and easily available barometer of human experience, that is reason enough for its popularity. When individuals like Khushwant Singh or Kamala Das or Bharati Mukherjee publish either a complete collection of short stories or a selection, it is another indication of not only the popularity of the form but of the fact that these writers have arrived. Moreover, collections of translated stories by writers in Indian languages like Vaikom Muhammad Basheer or Premchand or Satyajit Ray only enhance the possibilities for students of the Indian short story. These possibilities have to do with the study of representations of India in all its specificity and diversity, and a focus on the complexity of form in these stories. The appearance, in recent years of several short story anthologies devoted to women writers, and of Arjun Dangle’s edition of
importance of marginalized and minority groups and the fact that literature emanating from these groups will make its presence felt, if it has not already done so.

Short story writing is not new to India. As a literary form, the Indian short story, or to be precise, the ‘brief’ story in a variety of sub-forms, goes back to the Kathasaritasagara, the Panchatantra, the Jataka Tales, and to the tradition of folk-lore and legend, to the richness of which, a compiler like A.K. Ramanujan has done justice in his recent Folk Tales from India. In matters of strategies for story-telling, or weaving a narrative, or creating a frisson or generating suspense, Indians have a fine native provenance to go by and need not seek Western models. Without doubts the Indian short story is built on strong indigenous foundations.

British colonial rule and English proved to be catalysts in the creation of the modern sensibility in Indian short story. This modern Indian sensibility, as we shall see, is deeply influenced by the experience of colonial rule and the sentiment of nationalism. Many short stories, particularly at the turn of the nineteenth century or in the early decades of the twentieth, inevitably turn to the Indo-British encounter. Munshi Premchand’s stories constitute a classic instance of this preoccupation. He was writing at a time when nationalist sentiment was at its height, British rule was repressive, and independence was still years away. Yet, ironically the impact of the
West had itself generated nationalist ideas amongst Indians. In a story like ‘Namak Ka Daroga’, an important phase of the nationalist struggle culminating at Dandi is symbolically presented in the incident of salt being smuggled.

If the historical fact of British rule enabled short-story writing, the other momentous historical event of the Partition has also produced memorable literary expression. Alok Bhalla’s ‘Introduction’ to Stories about the Partition of India, a three-volume collection of Partition stories, charted this epoch as embodied in English translations of stories from major Indian languages. Partition stories were of different kinds. There were fundamental stories espousing the cause of Muslims and Pakistan or of Hindus and India. These gave a particular exclusive thrust to history, simplifying it and thus distorting it. But more complex attitude was also brought to bear on the writing of short stories. There were many which spoke of the horror and violence of Partition, the pity of it all. Yet others, and these were the best and most memorable, invoked the memory of it in an effort to recover balance. Writing of this kind was therapeutic, an antidote to any possible repetition of the violence and of the attitudes evinced in rabid insularity. A good example of this is Manto’s ‘Toba Tek Singh’, a touching and powerful indictment of Partition and the violence of that event, with the principal character, a lunatic, speculating about the fate of his village, and dying in his search for it; others are Vatsyayan’s ‘Getting Even’, and Ibrahim Jaleez’s ‘Grave Turned Inside Out’. 
Indian short story. With Independence, the reconstruction of India and the assertion of a national identity brought in some of the early works of Indo-English masters like R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand. The cultivation of a landscape, and topography around the semi-fictional Malgudi, as representative of a South Indian small town, complete with railway station, main street, school etc., is R.K. Narayan’s special forte. This taken together with the metaphysical speculations of Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand’s focus on the disadvantaged and dispossessed gave expression to three aspects of the life of an emerging nation. Narayan presented an idealized picture of a small town and its people. Rao focused on ‘spiritual’ India both in his characters and landscape, while Anand provided a delineation of the lower strata of Indian society. Between them, one might say, a large section of India, with the exception perhaps of the metropolis, was covered.

As the decades moved on, other emphases took over. Anita Desai, for example, writes about the psychological problems of the Indian middle class with insight and intensity. Kamala Das is concerned with the condition of women and the way in which they are betrayed by society. So from the political, social and spiritual levels, the short story modulated into the personal, the private and the psychological. New sexual mores, fresh possibilities in human relations, marriage, motherhood are explored. Kamala Das is a prime example of this, but
women's writing has expanded the significance of the genre, widened its horizons and made the short story a potent vehicle for social and psychological change. The distinguished critic, B. Rajan, wondered in 1965 whether the Indian tradition with its capacity for assimilation could come to terms with the new without eroding its fundamental character.¹ Rajan's prescience is remarkable but he need not have worried because the contemporary Indian short story has become an effective literary tool for the promotion of a secularized democratic culture quite at odds with the traditional pieties.

Politics and history continue to play a vital role in short story production. What Naipaul has called a 'million mutinies' or what Partha Chatterjee calls the 'fragmentation of the nation', have had their impact too, The large number of stories about women as represented in, for instance, Lakshmi Holmstrom's *The Inner Courtyard*, which contains writing both in English and in Indian languages clearly shows the nation in its specificities. The lesson is driven home of course much more clearly by the writers in the various Indian languages. The Indian short story in English is only reflective of one facet, that too, a minor facet of Indian life. India exists to a large extent in her languages and in the specific, in particular locations, societies, geographical spaces. Stories by Basheer, Mahasweta Devi, Ashokamitran and others in the various Indian languages clearly represent the plurality of Indian life and India's diversity.
shown their skill of storytelling quite splendidly. The diasporic consciousness is the most important characteristic of the contemporary Indian English short story and in this area also women writers have taken the lead. “E.M. Forster’s “only connect” has been superseded by all-round globalization and consequent cross-fertilization of different cultures.”

Its cultural, intellectual and emotional dimensions are being explored in the literature of the diaspora which, on account of its increasing richness, variety and comprehensive coverage, seems to be growing into an independent branch of literature, truly international in its parameters. Its writers, portraying the social, marital, professional and other types of inter-mixture, become the vehicles, sometimes themselves the arenas, of their interaction which has far reaching impact upon the personalities of the individuals involved. “One of the latest born of this diasporic hierarchy, catapulted to the elite of Pulitzer awardees with only one frail collection of nine short stories, is Jhumpa Lahiri, almost a literary phenomenon by herself.”

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala is a notable name in the field of contemporary Indian English short story. Jhabvala is a Polish by parentage, a German by birth, an English woman by education, and an Indian by marriage. In a way, English is her mother tongue, and she writes her novels and stories in it with utter sincerity and command. Her portrayal of Indian life is sensibly executed, with the added
Stories (1956), How I Became Holy Mother & Other Stories (1964), A Stronger Climate (1968), and An Experience of India (1972), in addition to nine novels. From these volumes, it is evident that Jhabvala gets totally depressed and disillusioned in India, which she calls a country of ‘heat and dust’, of slow movement and activity of indolence and laziness. Her A Stronger Climate is a pointer to this fact. Even An Experience of India is cast in the same gloomy mood and in the same attitude of helplessness.

R. P. Jhabvala is a major novelist and story writer in English today. However, her position is unique. She is not only different from Indo-Anglian novelists like R.K. Narayan, Anita Desai and Kamala Markandaya, but also from Anglo-Indian novelists like Rudyard Kipling, E.M. Forster and Paul Scott because of her cultural segregation. She has been an expatriate right from an early age. She is a Pole by parentage, a German by birth, an English woman by education and an Indian by marriage. At the age of 24 years amid the prime of her youth in the year 1951, Ruth Prawer left Britain for India as the lovely bride of C.H.Jhabvala, a young and youthful architect, stayed here for the next 25 years and made possible the publishing of her early short stories in The New Yorker, Cosmopolitan, The Cornhill Magazine and Encounter. She has said, looking back, that “as a writer I consider myself exceedingly fortunate to have come here when I did and the way I did.”
description of this first encounter with India suggests that writing and living blended for her into an intense joy of discovery:

It came about instinctively. I was enraptured. I felt I understood India so well. I loved everything.  

For almost the first 10 years in India she was in love with everything she saw there:

"The smells and sights and sounds of India - the mango and jasmine on hot nights - the rich special food - the vast sky - the sight of dawn and dusk - the birds flying about - the ruins - the music."  

Her early impressions then were full of the sensuous beauty she saw all around her in the country she described as a "paradise on earth." And just as on her arrival in Britain she had begun to write exclusively about England and the English, so now she writes exclusively about India and Indians. Within two years of her arrival in India Jhabvala had completed her first Indian novel *To Whom She Will*. After its publication Jhabvala was hailed as a talented new novelist and she was compared with Jane Austen, and was seen to be breaking away the established style of Indian English fiction.

In 1960 Jhabvala returned to England for the first time. The trip had a profound effect on her attitude towards India: "I saw people eating in London, everyone had clothes, and everything in me began to curdle about India." It appears that since her first trip back to England, Jhabvala like many of her characters, has been strapped to a wheel that takes her through the stages she believes all Europeans who visit India
There is a cycle that Europeans – by Europeans I mean all Westerners, including Americans – tend to pass through. It goes like this: first stage, tremendous enthusiasm; everything Indian is marvelous; second stage, everything Indian not so marvelous; third stage, everything Indian abominable. For some people it ends there, for others the cycle renews it and goes on. I have been through it so many times that now I think of myself as strapped to a wheel that goes round and round and sometimes I’m up and sometimes I’m down.9

Her changed attitude is clearly reflected in her fifth novel, Get Ready for Battle, in which she confronts the terrible atmosphere of poverty and disease in India. The problems and frustrations experienced by her Western characters reflect her own growing sense of dissatisfaction with her adopted country. In Myself in India she candidly describes her life of loneliness and boredom in India:

So I am back again alone in my room with the blinds drawn and the conditioner on. Sometimes, when I think of life, it seems to have contracted to air – this one point and to be concentrated in this one room, and it is always a very hot, very hot afternoon when the air-conditioner has failed. I cannot describe the oppression of such afternoons. It is a physical oppression – heat pressing down on me and pressing in the walls and the ceiling and congealing together with time, which has stood still and will never move again. And it is not only these two – heat and time – that are laying their weight on me but behind them, or held
within them, there is something more, which I can only describe as the whole of India.\textsuperscript{10}

From the above passage it is evident that R.P.Jhabvala has been suffering from a sense of loneliness and boredom in India. Her earlier impression of India as a paradise has gone away, and now she has become aware of the heat and dust of India. Her earlier experience of a newly-wedded bride has also gone and now she suffers from the continuous boredom in India. At the end she decides to go and settle in the U.S.A. in order to get rid of this boredom. Thus her journey from a bride to boredom brings out her thoughts and feelings about her adopted country India. In fact, the entire life of R. P. Jhabvala is the living embodiment of diaspora. While living in England she remembered Germany and in India she always remembered England. When she went finally went to America, she did not totally forget India. She used to remember India both in her novels and short stories.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala’s experience of India, the Indian scene and her endeavour to endow it with an aesthetic form and fictional design has evoked diverse reactions of critics in India and abroad. Unfavourable critics of her fiction, while admitting various aspects of her art of fiction, have highlighted her weaknesses such as the incapacity to probe deeply into the complex of life, to transform acute observations into sharp insights, and finally to transmute awareness of life into the accomplishment of art. On the other hand, favourably disposed critics have praised Jhabvala’s skillful art in exploring the Joycean mode, of ‘silence, exile and cunning’. The truth about
Jhabvala’s achievement as a writer, it seems, lies somewhere in between these two rather extreme critical positions. It is quite apt to quote V.A. Shahane:

Jhabvala as a short-story writer has been as skillful as she has been as a novelist. Her art excels in various spheres of the short story, such as mode of narration, style of description, an eye for detail, delineation of character and an ability to render her own view of the ‘slice of life’ in words. She is also an excellent artist in mapping out her chosen environment and outlining all the features in minute detail.11

East-west encounter is the dominant theme in the stories in her third collection *A Stronger Climate* and her concern is made all the more explicit in the epigraph: “They come no longer to conquer but to be conquered.” Thematically, Jhabvala’s *A Stronger Climate*, a collection of short stories, is divided into two parts: the Seekers and the Sufferers. The seekers, ironically, are in search of internal advancement, and end up with a sense of fulfillment, either in marital happiness or desired selfhood. The sufferers, on the contrary, are in a perpetual quest for the spiritual and, therefore, suffer from a crisis of identity. The ironic point of view of Jhabvala’s art further elucidates this idea. The seekers are satisfied with their ‘being’, while the sufferers are always in the process of ‘becoming’ – a process which ends up with the acceptance of the fact that despair – existential agony – is part of life itself.

The *Sadhus* in Jhabvala’s world are not always paragons of virtues or embodiments of the pure spirit, but an odd combination of worldly
the hankering after a spiritual experience, of Daphne, a young English girl, and Helga, her German companion, evoked by their association with the Swamiji and India. The Swamiji and Daphne taking a walk seem to Helga “like two love-birds”\textsuperscript{12}, and he tries to draw her out and make her surrender herself to the call of life and love. He calls her tenderly, ‘Daphne’, and adds ‘it is a pretty name’. Daphne tells him of the Greek legend of the nymph (Daphne), daughter of the river Peneus, who was loved by Apollo and the mortal Leucippus. Leucippus was slain, but Apollo still pursued the nymph and she, at his entreaty, was changed into a baytree, which became sacred to him. The Swamiji says, the legendary Daphne was afraid of love, and so is modern Daphne too.

The Swamiji associates Daphne with a rationalistic civilization, cool, practical, intelligent. She, however, on her part is willing to surrender her will to the Swamiji’s and do things at his bidding. She rewrites and restructures his dictations caring more for the spirit than just for grammatical accuracies or niceties. She wears a plain white cotton sari given to her as a gift. He tries to transform her, and she responds positively, saying ‘aye’ to life. Her walk in the woods and the bazaars is symbolic of the journey of her life. As Daphne crosses the holy bridge and folds her hand in homage to the holy river, one recalls that the legendary nymph was after all the daughter of a river. She walks back on the holy bridge, folding her hands and saying softly ‘Jai Gangaji’, and this scene is symbolic of her total identification with the
spirit of nature, god and India. Unlike the householder, Daphne has no strong ties. There, thus, is no competition for Swamiji’s demands upon her, and though she really does not want to be irrevocably tied to him, she allows herself to become so, largely through a lack of will to resist. The pivotal moment comes when she is picked to go with Swamiji to Southern California. He makes the decision for her, and in so doing not only cements her attachments to him, but causes her to abandon her own ego to his will. The final sentence of the story informs us, “She was completely happy to be going to California, and anywhere else he might want her to accompany him.”

“A Spiritual Call” is, thus, a story of tenderness and compassion, love and fellow-feeling, sincerity and sacrifice, self-realization and self-surrender.

The seekers in Jhabvala’s world are sometimes shown in domestic and familial contexts. What they seek is a sense of fulfillment, or selfhood, or just marital happiness. “The Young Couple” is a story of Cathy and Narain who got married in England and looked forward to their living in India with excitement and joy. The story describes their living together in India in an apartment in Delhi, and Cathy’s mild confrontation with her husband’s family. Of course, the family cared for, even loved her, but it didn’t approve of Cathy’s modern ways of walking through the bazaars and excursions into new areas of experience. On Sundays, both Narain and Cathy dutifully attend the family lunches which often end in a row—sometimes because Narain refuses to join the family business and insists on pursuing his own path.
of course in the secluded four corners of their bed-room, and this leads to his disapproval of her ways. Cathy too gets bored with lunches in restaurants of dancing or even meeting Narain’s friends. Narain’s mother questions Cathy about her excursions on foot, suggesting that these violate the family’s respectability. Cathy tries to mumble that she wants to be on her own and looks in vain to Narain to support her point of view. Like most Indian husbands, Narain remains silent for which Cathy takes him to task. Cathy tries to maintain her identity, the personal entity of her married life, but it seems inevitable that with the impending pregnancy this separate identity will be finally merged into the joint family stream. The delicate and tasty interior decorations of her small independent apartment reflecting her selective identity will finally be overcome by the view of heavily gaudy curtains, shiny furniture and satin bedspreads, of large rooms in their family mansions. Cathy is a seeker of love, independence, a happy married life in another country, and in her search she loses her own little world, the little England in her consciousness. She is both a seeker and a sufferer, and the phases of her consciousness constitute the main substance of the story. In fact, Cathy is a victim of her diasporic consciousness. Living in India she thinks of her country England and tries to maintain her separate English identity. Cathy, thus, represents R.P. Jhabvala the writer herself who also undergoes the similar circumstances after her marriage with an Indian. Jhabvala came to India with her pre-conceived
notions about India. But during her long stay in India she comes to the conclusion that India is a land of heat and dust. While living in India she remembers her country England which is the symbol of neatness and systematic development.

Several of Jhabvala’s characters tend to become psychological studies. Her technique, however, is primarily that of a social satirist or social comedian, and she hardly makes any attempt at all to probe into the psychological depth of her characters. In fact, some of her characters are neurotics, sexually and otherwise, for instance, the English girl, Henry’s wife in the story “An Experience of India”. The narrator is the wife of a western journalist assigned to India. At first both husband and wife feel they have “a marvelous opportunity ... spiritually,” a chance for “escape from that Western materialism with which we were both so terribly fed up.”

His attitude changes—she notes he had come for a change, whereas her purpose was to be changed. They drift apart. She takes to wandering the country, getting involved in one sexual adventure after another, more through a lack of resistance than from any psychological drive; she is not on a quest, she drifts. The sexual experiences themselves are quite negative: The men, “at the moment of mounting excitement”, inevitably ask how many men she’s slept with, and, then, at “the height of their love-making” excite themselves with “the last frenzy, the final outrage: ‘Bitch!’ Her response: “Sometimes I couldn’t stop myself but had to burst out laughing.” (p.85)
In her quest for the spiritual, physical and other realities of India, Henry’s wife gives up her very comfortable home, a sensible and sympathetic husband, and the values of an Anglo-Saxon middle class heritage. She wanders aimless, sleeps with fellow-passengers, finds kindred souls in middle-aged, suffering Indian men; falls in love, goes to bed with Ahmed and many others, leading a life hungry for all kinds of experience of the soul, the flesh, the carnality and also the spirit of India and Indians. It seems to be a life of abandon in which enjoyment of the flesh seems analogous to self-sacrifice, even self-transcendence. The bonds that bind her to this quest for experience are so strong that she refuses to fly with her husband, Henry, to a cozy life in Europe, sells her air ticket, and decides to travel again in India, almost penniless and poor. She seems to throw herself on India quite recklessly, actuated by complex feelings of a search for a new life.

In fact, the Europeans are faced with strange type of dilemma about India. Apparently they are drawn towards the spiritual values of India but when they encounter the reality, they come to know the reality and then they think their own country is as good as India. The diasporic feelings grip them and they long to go back to their motherland. The same happens with Henry’s wife also. The India that she experiences is neither intensely spiritual nor is it very morally elevated. The ‘Guru’ in Delhi wants Henry, her husband, to visit the Ashram and give it due publicity since he is a foreign journalist. He employs Jean to subdue the ego of this girl, and finally when nothing
succeeds, he visits her in her room and promptly gets on top of her, calling her ‘a bitch’. She only laughs scornfully because she finds that there is no difference at all between a sex-hungry wayfarer and the spiritual Guru. This completes one circle of her self-delusion. She returns to her husband in Delhi; the reunion is temporary, but her adventure with the guru is over.

Within that same anthology is a story without westerners, but which should be mentioned as it also contains a sexual consummation between a guru and student. It is called “The Housewife”, and the central figure, Shakuntala, while not really the aggressor, makes herself available to her music teacher. The guru-pupil relationship is parallel to the religious one, and the consummation, expressed in terms of the structure of a raga, is experienced by Shakuntala as a “blessed state”\(^{14}\). As in the other incidences, Shakuntala’s worldly ties are weak and she seems to drift into the relationship. That same year, 1972, the novel *New Dominion* was published. The pattern of the novel is similar to that of the story “The Housewife” with a slight change of character from Indian to English. Lee, an English woman, we are told in the first paragraph, has come to India “to lose herself- as she likes to put it- to find herself.”\(^{15}\) In Delhi she meets another English woman, Margaret, who has fled her family’s materialistic outlook. Margaret speaks in terms of being pure, of searching for herself, of taking from India. Together the two girls join an ashram, outside Banaras, wherein they share a hutment with Evie, a western disciple whose function is to sit
with which he may suddenly grace his devotees. The three English women surrender themselves physically and spiritually to the swamiji in order to know their identity. In fact, the interaction between two cultures, European and Indian, is Jhabvala’s special theme. It is her forte since it is in this area that her personal experience in India is transformed into art.

"How I Became a Holy Mother" was first published in *The Encounter* (London) and later included in the collection *How I Became a Holy Mother and Other Stories* published in 1976. It is one of the finest of Jhabvala’s stories which brings into a coherent focus all the elements of her art of fiction. It demonstrates vividly her excellent narrative power and also her art of evoking an atmosphere which helps in unfolding the character of the principal personages. It gradually unfolds the making of Katie, the central character, and her development into a Holy Mother. It is essentially a story of atmosphere, the growth of psyche, the development of a mind, the processes of "becoming" of a holy mother. It presents powerfully this extraordinary development of Katie – from the stage of her London life, of boy friends, two unsuccessful marriages, the modeling job to the most unexpected development of her joining an ashram in the vicinity of the mountains in India and finally becoming a holy mother to the young Swami, Vishwa.

In London Katie received a letter from Sophie who was trying to find peace in an ashram in South India. Katie was thus drawn to the
idea of joining an ashram in India where she could meditate and find the sorely-needed solace. Her initial experiences of the ashram and the swamis were dismal. She wrote about the ashram, “I didn’t like the bitchy atmosphere, and that swamiji was a big fraud ....”\textsuperscript{16}. However, she soon began to enjoy herself travelling from one ashram to another and meeting with a few genuinely dedicated people. She arrived at an ideal ashram beautifully situated in the slopes of mountains in the lower ranges of the Himalayas. Katie was also attracted to the swamiji ‘just called plain Master’, who was a dynamic person, full of pep and go. Although a swami devoted to the way of renunciation, he was quite lively and wouldn’t like anyone to have a dull moment. The Master had Indian as well as foreign disciples and several young men who aspired to become swamis. He took a great interest in the lives and wishes of the ashram inmates and would ask, “What about you, Katie?” (p.5)

The arrival of the highly sophisticated countess marked a change in the situation. She had earlier accompanied the Master on his foreign tour. She was rich, aristocratic, highly positive and also a spiritual lady. However, she didn’t seem very well special to Katie, though the countess and Katie got on very well together. The countess was very fond of Vishwa, a young swami who was being groomed for a visit abroad. She wanted Vishwa to become a great spiritual leader who would spread the message of the Vedanta in the West. The Master spoke to Katie about his experiences in the West. However, it was Vishwa who was being trained for this purpose. The Countess and
Vishwa the western manners and modes of behavior. The countess believed that Vishwa was her own precious private possession and she greatly fussed over him. Katie and Vishwa talked about their past over long hours and seemed to have become intimate in bed. Nobody indeed knew what transpired between young men and women in the afternoons in their closed ashram rooms; but probably the Master knew it all and took a very kindly view of such affairs. Vishwa performed the great yagna which was a grand affair. Then the Master gave orders that Vishwa should be the Guru and Katie the Holy Mother. She was to embody the Mother principle and they would make a good couple. Even Katie, like the Master and Vishwa, began to feel transformed by this experience. One would be in the Times Square in New York and yet visualize the mountains, the Himalayan peaks which embody the vision of a higher world. Even the countess was deeply affected by the quality of this vision in making preparation for Vishwa’s and the Holy Mother’s visit abroad and this endeavour seemed to have become her life’s fulfillment. Thus, “How I Became a Holy Mother” is essentially a story of the journey of the spirit – of Katie’s, the Master’s and Vishwa’s deepest longings. It is intense yet relaxed in its portrayal of this inward passion. Its development is from the negative to the affirmative, from Katie’s mood of doubt and self-criticism to her total acceptance of the role of the Holy Mother. It is essentially a story of the transformation of a soul.
“In the Mountains” is a story of Pritam, a middle-aged woman who tried to absorb the spirit of the hills and the valleys and thus sought the fulfillment of her self. Her mother arrived from Delhi to stay with her in her lonely resort in the hills. Pritam was lonely, individualistic and very different from the normal, ordinary, conventional women. She loved the hills and the mountains and the little hut in which the old, infirm doctor lived. This infirm, old man became her spiritual companion. During winter his small hut was almost destroyed and he came to stay with her in her cottage during that homeless, difficult period. With the improvement of the season, his hut was repaired and he went back to live in it. He was a voracious reader, thinker, philosopher and a man charming and delightful in many ways. He was poor and needy and Pritam looked after him and thought of him as a spiritual companion. Pritam’s mother arrived and this was followed by the arrival of her other relations in three cars who came to stay for lunch. Pritam bravely cooked delicious food for all of them, for Sarla and her husband, Bobby. Bobby and Pritam had met in the past on many occasions and had discussed free love. Now they had a rare chance of meeting again and Bobby confessed his great feeling for Pritam. They met again in a lonely path in the hill. He drank whisky and she too had a few sips which sent her blood rushing in her veins. She began to experience new sensations. She touched his cheek and neck to feel the sensations of the lovely past and the serene present. They talked of the doctor, a sort of a philosopher who would unfold the secrets of previous births of individuals and the series of their
incarnations. Bobby says good-bye and all the others depart for Shimla. Her mother, however, decides to stay on in that lonely place. In the last scene, Pritam is described as throwing three stones at the three cars which is a symbolic act. She rebels against the instruments of modern civilization and then calls for the doctor, her frail spiritual companion. She shouts “Food”, and he quickly responds by climbing up towards her cottage. Thus ends this very sensitive story of two simple souls who were the children of nature, the creatures of the mountains, the offspring of the lonely valley. They looked inwardly to their souls and outwardly to the clouds.

“In the Mountains” has little or no dramatic action at all; it is primarily a story of atmosphere, the climate of inner and outer lives, the transitory contact that the city-dwellers make with the two people who live in the mountains and the difference in their modes of living and thinking. The character and personality of Pritam holds the disparate elements of the story together and, in fact, weaves them into a coherent pattern. Pritam living in the lonely hills presents the example of a diasporic character and her constant gazing towards the sky is symbolic of her diasporic consciousness. The temporary visits of her friends and relatives is the symbolic of the visits of the countrymen whom the diasporeans miss a lot and feel a great solace after talking to them.

“Bombay” portrays a Parsi household in that cosmopolitan city with the Uncle and Nargis, his niece, as two main characters. It was a strange house in which the two brothers lived, both lovers of Persian
poetry and Victorian literature, and very fond of music. They were once married, but the wives were no more; so, for practical purposes they led the lives of bachelors. Their main aim was to educate and entertain Nargis whom they loved. Nargis got married to a man of business, of pale yellow complexion who ran the firm of Paniwala and Sons. He was very rich and kind, and found jobs in his firm for Nargis’ father as well as for the uncle. Meanwhile, Nargis’ father died and the uncle was left alone. He moved back to his small house in the suburb and began to lead a life of loneliness and penury. He sometimes visited the house of his niece, Nargis, where he was received kindly by her, but was almost humiliated by the pampered son of the family, Rusi, the arrogant, angry young man. He eyed the uncle with displeasure and contempt:

“Oh, back again”, he said, “Thought we’d get rid of you.” He gave one of his short, mad laughs.

“Yes”, said the uncle, “here you see me again. I had no food at home, so I came. Because of this”, he said, patting his thin stomach.

“All dogs are like that”, Rusi said, “Where there is food to be got, there they run. Have you heard of Pavlov? Of course not. You people are so ignorant.”

The spinsters in the house didn’t realize that this was downright insult and a cruel injury to the spirit of the old uncle, and they asked Rusi innocently: “Please teach us, Rusi darling.” Rusi was physically and mentally sick and the uncle “hated him more than any other human being on earth”:
Rusi looked up. Their eyes met; the uncle looked away. Rusi gave another of his laughs and said, “When Pavlov rang a bell, saliva came out of the dog’s mouth.” He tittered and pointed at the uncle, “we don’t even have to ring a bell! Khorshed, Pilla – look at him! Not even a bell!” (p.50).

This extraordinary inhuman behavior of Rusi towards the poor and forlorn uncle is an aspect of the suffering of the old and the infirm which makes this rather a touching, pathetic story. Rusi’s inhumanity and unkindness is contrasted with Nargis’ compassion for the uncle. Nargis fed her uncle with a curved spoon and he felt deeply gratified that his life “was not over by any means.” Indirectly R.P.Jhabvala means to say that all those people who have migrated to other countries for better prospect face a lot of trouble. The natives taunt and abuse them like Rusi but inspite of all the insult they feel like the uncle that life is not over by any means. By their hard work they make some place in foreign country find their sympathizers also.

“Bombay” is thus a story of a sensitive and helpless soul thrown against the hard realities of life. The old, impractical uncle suffers humiliation and insults worse than injury; he, however, also receives kindness and compassion which keeps his will to live in animated suspension. The Paniwala house was human as well as inhuman; and the story of the uncle, narrated with sensitivity, pathos and irony, is quite representative of a community of people living in the metropolis and foreign countries where the migrants have to face a lot of problem and suffer from diasporic feeling.
Jhabvala, acknowledged as “the most sophisticated novelist”\textsuperscript{18} is
the most prolific of our women writers with four collections\textsuperscript{19} to her
credit; all these collections have been hailed as aesthetically distinctive
and technically effective. An “inside-outsider” and an “outside-insider”
at the same time, her stories present the contemporary India with a
convincing faithfulness comparable to anything expected of a native
writer, and then, she has also had the added advantage of experiencing
it without any inborn sentimental attachment to it, which alone can
bring out in the full its defects and drawbacks in their proper
perspective. This double vision has made it possible for her to present
the Indian scene in a more acute way than is possible for an Indian
himself. “A Loss of Faith” in her first collection \textit{Like Birds, Like Fishes and
Other Stories (1963)}, for instance, is the story of a middle-class family
which has lost its bread-winner and is at the mercy of a near relative - a
situation not very uncommon in India. The trials and tribulations of this
family are narrated with the confidence of almost belonging to the
household. Jhabvala is of course quite at home in a sophisticated
Westernized family where, more than anywhere else, progressive views
and modern scientific attitudes clash with conservative and the
traditional as in “The Old Lady”. The mood in yet another story in the
first collection “The Aliens” is fully put to use in her stories in the third
collection \textit{A Stronger Climate}. In “The Interview”, one of her most
successful stories, using the stream-of-consciousness technique she
depicts the mind of an incompetent and diffident unemployed young
graduate. Given to much introspection and a sense of inferiority, the
young man runs away, after waking in a nightmare, from the very interview which he has come to attend, for he suddenly feels that he is not going to get the job after all! In the protagonist of the story, Jhabvala seems to suggest the typical Indian, incapable of facing problems and running away into a dreamland of happiness and pleasure only to be brought back rudely to the encircling gloom and unhappiness. In fact, such youths migrate to other countries for better prospect and get success also. But in their success they can’t altogether forget their motherland and always remember their county due to their diasporic consciousness.

*An Experience of India* has two stories “A Star and Two Girls” and “Suffering Women” treating the commercial film world which Jhabvala came to be associated with by then. The collection is prefaced with an interesting essay “Myself in India” in which she speaks of a cycle of responses from a tremendous enthusiasm to a sense of abominableness that Europeans in India pass through. The title story dramatizes this cycle of response to India by a Western woman who travels in India in search of self-fulfillment. Her short stories, like her novels, have a larger canvas after leaving India. Just one new collection of short stories, *East into Upper East* (1998) after her departure from India; perhaps because her energies were diverted to writing screenplay. She won an Oscar for her screenplay of Forster’s *A Room with a View*.

*Out of India: Selected Stories* (1986) adds nothing new to Jhabvala’s work. Her picture of India reinforces its image as an exotic land of sexy
men. This sentence from the short story, "Passion" is very considerable: "Indian men have such marvelous eyes - when they look at you, you can't help feeling all young and nice." East into Upper East contains fourteen short stories, six set in India, the rest in New York's Upper East Side. It is perhaps the most mature of her works. The worlds of the East and the West are joined by the theme of emotional deprivation. The social comedy of her earlier work is absent in the Indian stories. The dominant tone is one of somber disillusionment, and pain and suffering are common to both worlds. Now it is quite apt to sum up this part of our discussion on R.P. Jhabvala in the words of C.V. Venugopal: "In spite of the scanty dialogues, the characters often bordering on caricatures, near-commonness of themes which are quite often insufficiently dramatized, her special mode of realism, presentation of the East-West encounter in all its implications and authenticity, her profound and objective understanding of the post-independence Indian scene, her metaphysical concerns preserve Jhabvala's stories for the posterity." 

Thus we see that Indo-English fiction owes much to the historical phenomenon of juxtaposition of the two diametrically opposite cultures, namely the oriental and the occidental. It is natural that Indo-English writers should dwell on the problem of the cultural transplant's quest for identity. What is remarkable is the psychological insight, the familiarity and the ease with which the problem is dealt with by the women writers. The confrontation between the East and the West, the
immigrants are some of the aspects that are presented with a deep insight by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala in her short stories and novels.


3. Ibid. , p.122.


13. Ibid., p.111.


19. All these four collections are published by John Murray, London in 1963, 1968, 1972 and 1976 respectively.
